

Building peace via action research

African case studies

Edited by Sylvia Kaye and Geoff Harris

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Addis Ababa: University for Peace Africa Programme, 2017

ISBN: 978-99944-938-2-1

Acknowledgements

The editors wish to acknowledge the Durban University of Technology and all our students, past and present. The University's ongoing support and active encouragement made the Peacebuilding Programme a reality. Our students have been a constant source of learning and of inspiration, encouraging us to believe that we are on the right path.

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

Preface

About the editors

Notes on contributors

Introduction

Chapter 1

An overview of action research and its relevance to peacebuilding

Sylvia Kaye

Part I: Education and training

Chapter 2

Anti-corruption education as a way of building positive peace in Rwanda

Jean de Dieu Basabose

Chapter 3

Promoting non-violent parenting among refugee mothers in Durban

Beatrice Umubyeyi and Geoffrey Harris

Chapter 4

Developing social entrepreneurship in KwaZulu-Natal: reflections on an action research initiative

Gnanam Pillay

Chapter 5

Reducing gender-based violence: action research among Zimbabwean youth

Buhlebenkosi Maphosa

Chapter 6

Building capacity for conflict-sensitive reportage of elections in Nigeria: an action research study

Joseph Olusegun Adebayo

Part II: Healing and reconciliation

Chapter 7

Moving towards reconciliation using action research: Ndebele and Shona relations in Zimbabwe

Cyprian Muchemwa

Chapter 8

Healing the wounds of violence: a participatory action research project in Zimbabwe

Dumisani Ngwenya

Chapter 9

Addressing the healing of youth militia in Mashonaland East Province, Zimbabwe

Kudakwashe Chirambwi

Part III: Restorative justice

Chapter 10

Using restorative justice approaches with ex-prisoners and their families: an action research project in Zimbabwe

Ntombezakhe Moyo

Chapter 11

Reintegrating former child soldiers: an action research project in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo

Jean Chrysostome K. Kiyala

Part IV: Community peacebuilding

Chapter 12

Peacebuilding among Shona communities in transition in Zimbabwe

Norman Chivasa

Conclusion

Chapter 13

Building peace via action research: challenges and potential

Geoff Harris

Preface

This book arose from an increasing concern – which we believe is shared by many peace researchers – that our research makes very little difference to policy and practice. The reasons for this can be many, including a lack of connection between the researchers and policymakers. The latter may not act on our research either because they are not aware of it or because their own agendas do not in fact prioritise peace.

Action researchers are impatient and do not want to wait for a gradual change over many years in the way policymakers think and act. Action research provides an opportunity for at least some peace to be built during the course of the research. Action researchers are committed to genuine participation of the people whose situations are being researched. Hopefully, they are willing to be catalysts and facilitators and let the people take the research in the way which seems best to them.

The case studies in this book illustrate the challenges involved in carrying out action research within the broad constraints imposed by the requirements of a postgraduate degree. The case studies represent a wide range of possible uses of action research in peacebuilding.

We asked contributors for submissions to include the following:

- A clear statement of the problem which the research was intended to tackle
- A clear description of the action processes which were planned and the ways
- The data which was generated, including how it was collected/recorded and analysed
- The challenges faced in conducting the action and the responses made to them
- An evaluation of the action process
- The project's outcomes.

In the last few weeks of putting this book together, we came across an excellent book edited by Christiane Kayser and Flaubert Djateng, titled *Action research: a necessity in peace work* and published by Bread for the World – Protestant Development Service, Berlin, 2015. Its main thrust, with which we totally agree, is encapsulated in the title of its first chapter – 'Action research – an essential tool in the work for social change and sustainable peace'.

Sylvia Kaye and Geoff Harris

Durban, August 2016

Introduction

An overview of action research and its relevance to peacebuilding

Sylvia Kaye

Introduction

This book aims to illustrate ways in which action research (AR) can be used in peacebuilding efforts. The use of action research, particularly in peacebuilding research, is increasingly acknowledged as contributing towards peaceful solutions to social problems occurring at a community level. It constitutes an effective method in peacebuilding and peace studies as it provides a systematic way of developing a theory, obtaining the necessary data, and - with the participation of the respondents - developing and testing an intervention. The case studies in this book describe action research applications through small scale interventions, all on a micro level, which utilise the principles of action research - systematic research design and praxis in a specific context. Action research, we believe, can be applied at all levels of society wherever groups collaborate. At the very localised level, researchers have the opportunity to engage closely with individuals and groups with the aim of solving challenging problems. The outcomes of research of this nature have a wide range of possibilities: one is that the researcher has the opportunity to work closely with local participants to identify a problem and then to collaborate with a group to test possible interventions. Another important outcome is that both the community and the researcher gain knowledge of how problems can be peacefully resolved. We argue in this book that exploratory research alone is insufficient when the goal is change and transformation. Research begins the process of contextualising the problem: action research develops and tests possible solutions stemming from the information gathered by exploratory research.

We do not propose that action research outcomes on a grassroots level can be replicated across cultures and situations, nor can it be assumed that grassroots efforts can easily be up-scaled. But when policies are based on principled, tested research, they are more likely to be beneficial over time. In contrast, we argue that when policy is dictated by fleeting, political ideologies or through pandering to the vested interests often inherent in partisan politics, the end result is of poor quality. Policies driven by self-interest or a thirst for power exacerbate problems instead of solving them.

Research has to produce *more* than just a book. Without people's participation in developing a solution, the solution is more likely to fail as whatever is proposed has to be done *with*, not *to*, the people involved. People are capable of understanding and participating in change. Action research is intended to focus this understanding and then to expand it with the aim of change and improvement.

Action research has been successfully applied in various fields such as education, development, management, health, and peacebuilding. The different applications depend on a very diverse set of situations, hence the challenges of settling on a fixed method. Education, for example, frequently uses action research for educators to improve educational practice in a classroom. In health, practitioners use action research to improve the quality of care. In an organisation, it can be used to understand and improve organisational behaviour. The study of peacebuilding is itself extremely broad, ranging from a community's healing from trauma, conflict transformation between individuals and groups, steps needed for forgiveness and reconciliation, to building community peace committees. Implicit in peacebuilding is the need for action, for change, for conflict transformation. The United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (n.d.) describes peacebuilding as "action to

identify and support structures, which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict". Seen through the lens of action, the constructive nature of peacebuilding (Galtung 1996: 11) considers "theories that might work and brings them together with values about what ought to work". Action links *what might work* with *what ought to work*.

Complexity and uncertainty

On one level, resolving and transforming conflict is not simple as the root causes are usually very complex with uncertain solutions, even when applying overarching principles such as the need for forgiveness and that unity is the ultimate goal. In the social sciences and especially in the field of peace studies the idea of defining a problem, proposing a solution, implementing and expecting it to work according to plan is simply not feasible. In the 1960s, the concept of "wicked problems"¹ was coined by Horst Rittel. Webber and Rittel (1973) define such problems as having no definitive formulation of the problem, there are no criteria for correctness, there is no ultimate test of a solution, there are no well-defined solutions, further, such problems are unique. This has led to a change away from straightforward planning methods:

We have been learning to ask whether what we are doing is the right thing to do. That is to say, we have been learning to ask questions about the outputs of actions and to pose problem statements in valiative frameworks (1973: 159).

Research is intended to produce solutions to even the most challenging and complex problems of the world. Yet, given the vast volume of journal articles, books and dissertations from academics and students throughout the world, the question is the degree to which society's problems are closer to being resolved. The concern that research should lead to progress and advancement, and be moving out of the world of words generating words, is one that this book addresses. On one hand, there is good evidence that there are advances in knowledge and in society; and on the other, new, extremely vexing problems arise on a daily basis. The problems of inequality on a global scale, of injustice, and of corruption in political leadership, appear to be growing in their complexity and resistance to change. Theories, therefore, given such complexities, need to be continually developed, tested, and modified, accepting that any new knowledge gained has an inherent quality of ambiguity, misinterpretation and uncertainty.

We believe that the complexity of humanity's problems compels research to be based on principle, not simply pragmatism. In the field of peacebuilding, it is insufficient and moreover dangerous, to propose solutions that have not taken into account the context and the underlying values of the proposed outcomes, or excluded the views of the people involved. We accept that problems are complicated and that no simplistic solution can resolve humanity's present plight. In a statement by the Universal House of Justice (1985), commitment and principle are advocated:

[...] the abolition of war is not simply a matter of signing treaties and protocols; it is a complex task requiring a new level of commitment to resolving issues not customarily associated with the pursuit of peace. Based on political agreements alone, the idea of collective security is a chimera. The other point is that the primary challenge in dealing with issues of peace is to raise the context to the level of principle, as distinct from pure pragmatism (1985: 7).

Peacebuilding context

In the peacebuilding context, the goal is to promote transformation and change, to foster solutions that lead first to a cessation of hostility or conflict, and ultimately to a profound change in which harmony and peace are realities instead of wishes. Peacebuilding studies attempts to understand

¹ Wicked in the sense of tricky, malignant, vicious (Webber and Rittel 1973: 160).

firstly the nature of destructive tendencies or practices: conflict, when allowed to fester and remain unresolved, leads to disunity and deep frustration, resulting in destructive acts of violence as the means of solving whatever the problem may be. Violence breeds more violence and deeper divisions, leading to a cycle of violence that continues for decades. The suffering is unnecessary, as the tools and means for resolving the problem are available, but why is there resistance to this being achieved? Building peace is not a mechanical or overly simplified process as it involves myriad factors – how people learn and how change and transformation come about, the dynamics of power and of groups, understanding the history and context in which the conflict occurs, seeing beyond the conflict to broader failures of structures or systems. A mechanical solution, for example the use of a training manual disregarding the context, seldom leads to real transformation.

Galtung conceptualised the transformation from conflict to peace by seeing peacebuilding at two levels: negative or positive peace (1996). He argued that a simple cessation of conflict does not imply that the problem is resolved. In such cases of negative peace, the problem may lay dormant for some time and then erupt again in violence or conflict. When looking at root causes of violence, Galtung suggested that violence can be direct, structural and cultural. Although not necessarily independent from each other, such perspectives provide a useful construct when attempting to understand the nature of a conflict.

When reflecting on the components proposed by Galtung, Confortini suggested that

[...] gender lenses could be applied to see how the three components are related to each other, and how gendered attitudes contribute to the preservation of violence in society. The different levels of violence cannot be viewed in isolation from each other, and they cannot be viewed as independent from the social construction of hegemonic identities, be it hegemonic masculinities or hegemonic races (2006: 357).

Gender, simply stated, cannot be ignored nor side-lined in peacebuilding efforts given that gendered relationships and attitudes are in every societal relationship, beginning right from infancy. De la Rey and McKay (2006: 143) write about the transition of peacebuilding theories - from Galtung (1976) to Boutros-Ghali (1992) and his essay *An Agenda for Peace*, in which he emphasized “the importance of structural peacebuilding in the post-conflict period”. In 2000, the UN Security Council, along with other international organisations, adopted Resolution 1325, which promoted “the critical importance of women’s peacebuilding and advocated that women must be included in all aspects of peacebuilding.... It called on all actors who negotiate and implement peace agreements to adopt a gender perspective in the implementation of peace agreements...” (cited in De la Rey and McKay: 44).

The concept of peacebuilding, emerged through an evolutionary process of understanding its meaning through theory and a wide range of actions at the local, national and international level, includes equity and social justice, the full inclusion of women at all levels of society, the need for collaboration, support and trust and the necessity for basic needs to be met (ibid).

Action research

In this book, we consider several of the key definitions, the origins of the concept, the manner in which it is conceptualised in research, and examine the core elements that are common to most theorists. These core elements are complemented by theories from other disciplines, which present the same elements in a different context and which we propose are central to change, the foundation of social science research and of peacebuilding.

Central to action research is collaboration and the participation of the people who are experiencing the problem. We acknowledge that participatory action research is frequently differentiated from action research; however, since participation is key to both (McNiff and Whitehead 2011), the difference may be the degree of the focus on the participatory nature of the research rather than

any major differences. For the purposes of this chapter, we use 'action research' with the understanding that participation and collaboration are implicit in the definition, however varied that participation and collaboration may be. Participatory research is conceptualised as empowering more widely and systematically (Nelson and Wright 2000: 58). The underlying core components are what matter and when a research plan is developed, the research paradigm has to be clearly defined and the methodology fit within a particular paradigm. As will be seen from the cases in this book, each case study uses a different paradigm and each researcher developed distinct methodologies in order to apply this method in research.

There is no singular definition of action research. McNiff and Whitehead (2011) define action research as a form of enquiry that enables practitioners in every job and walk of life to investigate and evaluate their work. Action researchers are *insider* researchers who see themselves as part of the context they are investigating. McNiff and Whitehead (2001: 8) say:

There is general agreement among the action research community that action research is about: *action*: taking action to improve practice, and... *research*: finding things out and coming to new understandings, that is, creating new knowledge. In action research the knowledge is about how and why improvement has happened.

Another definition of was proposed by Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury (2001: 1), again emphasising the centrality of participation:

A participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview which we believe is emerging at this historical moment. It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities.

The stress of these definitions is on the importance of both action and research. Without a balance, the research can become overly focused on obtaining data and its analysis without much action, or conversely, it can become overly focused on the action without a sound research methodology. French and Bell (1999: 138) note the problems that can arise with an imbalance between the two:

The payoff from a good action research project is high: practical problems get solved, a contribution is made to the theory and practice of behavioural science and greater understanding grows among scientist, practitioner and layperson... researchers (can) become overly client-centered and focus only on the action, not research; they do not define problems from the perspective of the client; they do not study the processes of their own interventions, they neglect to test hypotheses; and they continue to work within the paradigm of 'normal science'.

Another challenge for researchers is that action research projects usually take place as part of a formal academic programme or through, for example, a time-limited NGO project. Again, this becomes a problem of possible imbalances as it may become necessary to speed through the project given such time restrictions. Badham and Sense (2005: 368) describe the "complex and often conflicting nature of the choices enveloping the action researcher undertaking this form of inquiry". If not balanced, there is the danger of being pressured to propose untested solutions, rushing through the reflective stage of action research, or feeling the need to report positive results. Action research, however, is "inherently an uncertain and ethically complex improvisational exercise..." (Ibid: 370).

Action research and its origins

Action research in a more informal sense has existed for generations, particularly in pluralistic societies that value consultative approaches to problem-solving. While the more formal definitions arose in the 20th century, it can be argued that the collaborative and participatory nature of groups and of problem-solving is at the heart of the way in which humanity's challenges can best be overcome. Societies that foster a spirit of consultation fit well with an action research paradigm. The participation of members of the group is another central aspect, the theory being that without active participation, solutions can be externally decided upon and often are unworkable. Instances of this are unfortunately well documented in the field of development and externally-driven peacebuilding efforts.

Lewin is credited with developing a more formal meaning of action research, stemming from his research with minorities. He concluded that there was a great deal of good-will between the groups but they felt that they were in a mental fog and uncertain of what was to be done to solve the problems of division. He identified the need to understand if actions led backward or forward, helping to move people out of a fog and translate the good-will into action. He was concerned with the lack of movement and that research alone would not produce much. Lewin (1946: 35, 37) wrote: "Research that produces nothing but books will not suffice", and "Mere diagnosis – and surveys are a type of diagnosis – does not suffice".

The research needed for social practice can best be characterized as research for social management or social engineering. It is a type of action-research, a comparative research on the conditions and effects of various forms of social action, and research leading to social action.

Later authors expanded on this concept in various, at times divergent, ways as attempts to use action research increased, which in turn led to new definitions and the formation of groups representing different schools of thought. Examples of the range of use are: an educator improving teaching practices, a health worker improving health care for patients, development projects improving a community's social or economic conditions, and peacebuilding plans to foster peaceful solutions to problems. McNiff and Whitehead (2011) are of the view that no matter what form action research may take, its purpose is to generate new knowledge and new or revised theories.

The action research cycle

Action research is described as cyclical. Johnson (2008) describes the process of action research as being recursive and non-linear with the answer unknown. Trying to understand an unknown answer to a problem is what fosters the method of cyclical learning through steps or stages that repeat as new knowledge is gained from the practice. The action research cycle is described differently by different authors, but there is consensus that action research combines theory and practice, repeating certain steps or stages. McNiff and Whitehead (2011: 8) describe an action research plan to be:

- Take stock of what is going on
- Identify a concern
- Think of a possible way forward
- Try it out
- Monitor the action by gathering data to show what is happening
- Evaluate progress by establishing procedures for making judgements about what is happening

- Test the validity of claims to knowledge
- Modify practice in light of the evaluation.

Such plans and cycles are generally presented diagrammatically and the following figure illustrates one such cycle:

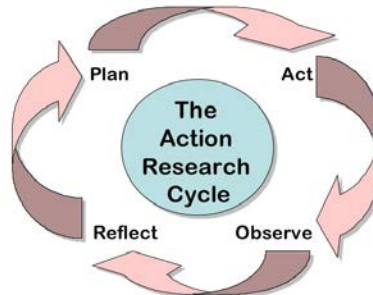


Figure 1: The Action Research Cycle.

Source: Nelson 2014.

The four stages are not dissimilar to how McNiff and Whitehead conceptualised the key components of an action research cycle.

One of the stages, reflection, deserves particular attention. While it is assumed that reflection takes place throughout the research process – in designing the project, in identifying similarities and contradictions in literature, in analysing data – the reflective process takes on additional importance in action research since without that reflective process taking place, the new cycle would simply repeat the former plan without modification or evidence of new learning. It is this reflective stage that fosters new learning as the reflections are then built into the next cycle of the process. Badham and Sense (2006: 374) note that “Without some form of systematic yet improvisational reflection on practice, action researchers will not develop their competence to readjust their current approaches...”.

In the cases presented in this book, the reflective stage takes on very different forms depending on the nature of the particular project. In some cases, the researcher reflects with an action team after the action has been done, in others, attempts are made to see if any changes can be identified even though the time frame may be limited.

Core components of action research

Titchen (2015: 7) identified major definitions of AR and how they evolved over time, explaining how the major shifts in perspectives became seen as emancipatory and transformational. These definitions, despite their differences, share a common core: they are concerned with bringing about change and simultaneously generating theory grounded in practice. The commonalities, or core components, of the definitions are that action research should be:

- Collaborative
- Systematic
- Rigorous
- Future oriented
- Reflective/reflexive

- Evaluative
- Participative
- Situational
- Value committed

Implicit in these core components is empowerment, as the people themselves devise and test a solution. Assuming the premise of Lewin, that people are generally well-intentioned and have the aim of living in peace, action research is ideally suited to create more permanent solutions as it draws upon the good-will of people and helps them learn a way “out of the fog of uncertainty” to learn what can be done to improve the situation. Thinking of action research in terms of these core components can aid in formulating a research proposal utilising action research. Flexibility based on the context and the research goal is possible using this framework of the action research cycle. These core components can be thought of as forming interwoven pillars of action research.

Values of action research

Here we expand on the last point above, that action research is “value committed”. What then can be considered as values? Are there universal values irrespective of culture or religious beliefs? How are values interpreted differently by different people? How do such values relate to peace? We think it is appropriate to name several underlying values, leaving it to the individual to make meaning of the way in which values relate to any specific action research approach. Human societies are based on a myriad range of values. One is described by Paulo Freire in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2007: 91) as that of “faith in humanity and in people”:

Founding itself upon love, humility, and faith, dialogue becomes a horizontal relationship of which mutual trust between the dialogues is the logical consequence. It would be a contradiction in terms if dialogue—loving, humble, and full of faith—did not produce this climate of mutual trust, which leads the dialoguers into ever closer partnership in the naming of the world. ... Whereas faith in humankind is an *a priori* requirement for dialogue, trust is established by dialogue.

We would like to suggest other values, including:

- *Good-will*: people generally prefer harmony and peace in families, communities, and nations. When situations deteriorate to the extent of violence or disunity, until a solution is developed, the preference is towards peace and not endless conflict. Action research can provide the tools and insights to turn that preference into constructive action. Implicit is that peace can be attained with peaceful solutions, the opposite being that violence and hatred beget violence and hatred.
- *Trust*: since action research is collaborative, trust is a key value that should be manifested by the researcher and the participants.
- *Hope*: research is based on the hope that good can come from the work being done.
- *Justice*: action research is intended to contribute towards creating just societies.
- *Oneness of humanity*: in spite of cultural, national or racial differences, humanity is one race living on one earth. Accepting this reality is a major contributing factor towards changes in attitudes and practices.

This is certainly not an exhaustive list. The point made by Titchen (2015) and other authors is that a commitment to values forms the bedrock of this kind of research, particularly since the problems of humanity are deep-rooted, often caused by the opposite of such values. The points below, taken from a statement by the Universal House of Justice (1985: 8) illustrate some of the more deep-rooted causes of division and conflict:

- *Racism*, one of the most baneful and persistent evils, is a major barrier to peace. Its practice perpetrates too outrageous a violation of the dignity of human beings to be countenanced under any pretext. Racism retards the unfoldment of the boundless potentialities of its victims, corrupts its perpetrators, and blights human progress.
- *The inordinate disparity between rich and poor*, a source of acute suffering, keeps the world in a state of instability, virtually on the brink of war... A fresh look at the problem is required, entailing consultation with experts from a wide spectrum of disciplines, devoid of economic and ideological polemics, and involving the people directly affected in the decisions that must urgently be made.
- *Religious strife*, throughout history, has been the cause of innumerable wars and conflicts, a major blight to progress, and is increasingly abhorrent to the people of all faiths and no faith... How are the differences between them to be resolved, both in theory and in practice?
- *The emancipation of women*, the achievement of full equality between the sexes, is one of the most important, though less acknowledged prerequisites of peace. The denial of such equality perpetrates an injustice against one half of the world's population and promotes in men harmful attitudes and habits that are carried from the family to the workplace, to political life, and ultimately to international relations. There are no grounds, moral, practical, or biological, upon which such denial can be justified.

Peacebuilding, transformative learning and development

We now turn to several fields of study which discuss congruent concepts, suggesting that the basic theories of one are very similar to another.

Peacebuilding and collaboration

Peacebuilding is centred on the concept of transformation and change. Boutros-Ghali (United Nations 1992: para. 21) defined post-conflict peacebuilding as “action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid relapse into conflict”. Subsequently, the concept was expanded in somewhat confusing and diverse ways (Call and Cousens 2008), differentiating peacebuilding according to maximalist perspectives – redressing root causes, minimalist – no renewed warfare and moderate – no renewed warfare plus decent governance. The United Nations Security Council (2001) stated that

... peacebuilding is aimed at preventing the outbreak, the recurrence or the continuation of armed conflict and therefore encompasses a wide range of political, development, humanitarian and human rights programmes and mechanisms. This requires short- and long-term actions tailored to address the particular needs of societies sliding into conflict or emerging from it. These actions should focus on fostering sustainable development, the eradication of poverty and inequalities, transparent and accountable governance, the promotion of democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law and the promotion of a culture of peace and nonviolence.

The United Nations objectives stem from the need for peacekeeping and peacebuilding on international and national levels: the dynamics of such situations are seemingly profoundly different

from micro-level conflicts, however, the causes and solutions involve the same core processes of healing, reconciliation, forgiveness and transformation of attitudes and behaviour. Both prevention and treatment, whether on a large or small scale, can be done in a participatory or top-down way.

Participation and collaboration in solving social problems are central to individual and collective change. Much of current thought regarding collaboration and emancipation came from Freire (1970: 54), who expanded the definition of oppression to include:

Any situation in which "A" objectively exploits "B" or hinders his and her pursuit of self-affirmation as a responsible person is one of oppression. Such a situation in itself constitutes violence, even when sweetened by false generosity, because it interferes with the individual's ontological and historical vocation to be more fully human. With the establishment of a relationship of oppression, violence has already begun.

And, in terms of violence (ibid):

Whereas the violence of the oppressors prevents the oppressed from being fully human, the response of the latter to this violence is grounded in the desire to pursue the right to be human.

Freire (2007: 87) states the need for both action and reflection in order to bring about freedom from oppression in its many forms:

When a word is deprived of its dimension of action, reflection automatically suffers as well; and the word is changed into idle chatter, into verbalism, into an alienated and alienating "blah." It becomes an empty word, one which cannot denounce the world, for denunciation is impossible without a commitment to transform, and there is no transformation without action.

According to Freire (2007: 19) the process of conscientisation is that of "learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions – developing a critical awareness – so that individuals can take action against the oppressive elements of reality". Such writings contributed towards a change in attitude to those in need from one of powerlessness to one in which the power of the individual and groups to effect change was recognised, and therefore participatory solutions could be developed collectively.

Transformative learning

Transformative learning is defined as a change in attitudes and behaviour, an expansion of one's worldview. Such transformation is a step towards empowerment and emancipation – empowerment in the sense that new knowledge opens new doors that had been closed; emancipation in the sense of freedom from prejudice, from believing one must act a certain way, or believing that knowledge is absolute. Kitchenham (2008) traces the evolution and modification of this theory, originally developed by Mezirow and other authors such as Habermas and Freire. *Critical self-reflection* is central to the idea of transformative learning: without the reflective process, little or no transformation is possible. Mezirow had identified phases of learning beginning with a disorienting dilemma followed by critical assessment, planning, action and reflection, then integrating new roles and relationships (Kitchenham 2008). Hoggan (2016: 71), in a review of how transformative learning theory has evolved, provides this explanation for individual transformation: "Transformative learning refers to processes that result in significant and irreversible changes in the way a person experiences, conceptualizes, and interacts with the world".

In one study, McCaffery (2005: 444) attempted to include the concepts of transformative learning and peacebuilding in an African literacy project. The older method of teaching literacy was a formal, top-down teaching approach under which students were taught to learn in a rote manner. The study combined conflict resolution and peacebuilding theory in the literacy programme, noting that: "The

synergy thus created contributed to developing a climate of responsiveness to the psychological and practical aspirations of individuals and communities and to the process of forgiveness and reconciliation”.

The learning process includes not only rational or cognitive thought, but also intuition, imagination and insight (Dirkx 2001). Learning is a product of neither the individual will nor the powerful forces of sociocultural structures. Rather, learning is understood as a process that takes place within the dynamic and paradoxical relationship of self and other (Dirkx and Deems 1996). The “other” is anything, anyone, or any group we perceive as apart or separate from our individual natures. In a deeper sense, Dirkx describes such learning as of the soul and spiritual in nature.

The way in which individuals create meaning is central to peacebuilding efforts, as people learn to understand how change can be brought about. Constructivist learning theories attempt to describe this process: each individual, drawing on both social and individual influences, uniquely *constructing* meaning and making sense of the world. Meaning continually changes with new experiences. Constructivist theories of learning are frequently attributed to have originated from Vygotsky, a Russian Psychologist (1896 - 1934). Hendricks (2001: 302) posited that “learning and doing are inseparable and that learning is a process of enculturation [...]”. He attributes this understanding to Vygotsky, who wrote that students learn through social contexts, through verbal mapping provided by an educator, and through an appropriate experiential learning activity.

The concept of experiential learning originated with Kolb (1984) who proposed the experiential learning theory (ELT). Kayes (2002: 139) postulates that this theory rests on six assumptions, namely that learning:

- is a process, not an outcome;
- derives from experiences;
- requires an individual to resolve dialectically opposed demands;
- is holistic and integrative;
- requires interplay between a person and the environment; and
- results in knowledge creation.

Of importance in relationship to action research is Kolb’s “Experiential Learning Cycle”, composed of experience, concept, reflection and action: learning occurs in a cyclical but not necessarily orderly fashion. Learning is formally defined as “a change in behaviour”, and the change may be gradual, or dramatic through a spark of insight.

Senechi (2002: 43) writes about the power of narratives and storytelling as the means of deconstructing a past story and constructing a new story which “serve as a rationale for action”, for transformation. Telling the story can, however, also harden attitudes and mistrust, changing the constructive process to one of destruction and one based on power dynamics. The purpose of the story is therefore to foster the use of narrative for the purpose of conflict transformation.

Development

When World War II ended, a decision was made to reconstruct rather than punish a defeated Germany. An important lesson learned from World War I was that punitive measures, requiring Germany to pay restitution for the cost of the war, had failed and were one of the major causes of World War II. The Marshall Plan is considered to be the first global development intervention and was based on the idea that rebuilding Germany would incorporate the lesson learned into a new framework for action. Subsequently, plans to develop other parts of the world emerged, mostly following an industrial/economic model, in which it was assumed that poverty could be eliminated

through higher levels of income and industrial infrastructures. The “less-developed” were poor: if they had money and became “modern”, their other problems could be resolved such as poor educational and health systems (Roberts and Hite 2000). The movement from traditional societies to modernity failed for a variety of reasons, for example some of the economic solutions were decided on in a top-down manner and imposed unfamiliar and unusable technologies on communities. In other instances donor agencies attached strings such as requiring the project they were funding to use certain goods or the donor’s personnel. Often, the motives from the donor nations and NGOs were mixed – although partly philanthropic, the vested economic or political interests often weakened the altruistic nature of development projects.

Over time, the failure of donor-driven projects based primarily on the assumption that the so-called under-developed could be helped, led to a new set of “lessons learned”. People at the grassroots had previously been omitted from much of the planning, but now participation emerged as the newest trend in development planning. A new series of terminology and frameworks emerged: sustainable development; participatory development; pro-poor development. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in 2015 identified 17 Sustainable Development Goals designed to eliminate poverty and combat climate change. These built on the Millennium Development Goals that were supposed to have been achieved by 2015. UNDP (2016) explains that:

The concept of the SDGs was born at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20, in 2012. The objective was to produce a set of universally applicable goals that balances the three dimensions of sustainable development: environmental, social, and economic... The MDGs established measurable, universally-agreed objectives for eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, preventing deadly but treatable disease, and expanding educational opportunities to all children, among other development imperatives.

However, in spite of all the development efforts, good evidence suggests that the poverty levels have actually increased as has the disparity between rich and poor. The United Nations (2013: 1) stated that:

In most countries... inequality had increased in the past three decades, while disparities between high- and low-income States had nearly doubled in the past 20 years. Such inequality led to poor growth, greater susceptibility to financial crises, exacerbated crime rates, reduced social cohesion and mobility, and greater instability and unrest.

The reasons for this are debated at all levels and dominate the development discourse. But at the very least, full participation seems to be essential in any development work. This same principle applies equally to peacebuilding efforts to resolving problems, however much the meaning and methodology may vary. It would be difficult to find a current development or peacebuilding project that does not advocate for full participation of those involved. The various definitions which are emerging together with new understanding and rich experience, continually improve the quality of participatory research. The degree to which participation is actually carried out is however as important as its definition, as participation can be very cursory and therefore more a show than a true practice.

Conclusion

In the above discussion, we identified the following points:

- Action research is ideally suited to peacebuilding given the collaborative and participatory nature of this research design;
- Understanding context is inextricably linked to peacebuilding;

- Action research combines theory and practice, creating new knowledge;
- Knowledge is ambiguous and uncertain;
- Harmful practices can be resolved through understanding the process by which change and transformation take place;
- Reflection is an indispensable component of action research;
- Action research has the capability of empowering people to take responsibility for their own solutions. Action researchers facilitate this process;
- Values constitute one of the core components of any action research;
- Participatory action research and action research vary in definition but both stress the need for participation;
- Action research is frequently on a micro level, but the principles of planning, action and reflection are essential for change.

The value of action research, we believe, lies in its central processes of planning, action and reflection, with the reflective process providing the understanding and meaning required to take the next step needed. It is necessary to see things both holistically and in context. The process of learning and understanding the nature of conflict and of human societies is on-going. Incremental improvements are the building blocks for real change to become permanent. The challenge for peacebuilding scholars and practitioners is to understand how to translate ideals into practice, how to identify and improve solutions.

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Part I:

Education and Training

2

Chapter

Anti-corruption education as a way of building positive peace in Rwanda

Jean de Dieu Basabose

Introduction

Corruption has increasingly become a challenging issue that undermines peacebuilding processes. Anti-corruption efforts therefore constitute one of the ways of building and sustaining positive peace. Attempts to combat corruption generally follow one of three strategies which include: developing legal and punitive frameworks, establishing investigative and preventive mechanisms and promoting ethical values-based approaches.

This chapter presents the case study of an action research carried out in Rwanda during the period of 2011-2014. The research was conducted in the framework of community peacebuilding efforts by Shalom Educating for Peace. The action research project was undertaken with the objective of promoting anti-corruption education as a way of building and sustaining positive peace in Rwanda. It underlines the role of educating for and upholding Ubupfura cultural ethical values in resisting and combating corruption. (Ubupfura is defined in the chapter as a high sense of nobility, with its defining values of humbleness, advising, fulfilling agreements, patience, honesty, gratefulness, carefulness and integrity.). Supporting other existing approaches to fight against corruption in Rwanda, the study has advocated for promoting an anti-corruption campaign for Rwandan children. Through the study, an anti-corruption curriculum was designed, implemented and evaluated. The study has demonstrated that anti-corruption education for children is an imperative component of a successful anti-corruption strategy.

Problem statement

Corruption is an endemic feature of the contemporary human society and is one of its major development challenges. Almost all development goals are influenced – negatively for the most part - by corruption (Campos and Pradhan 2007; Mauro 1997). It is recognised to generate injustices, creates a context where poor and weak people constitute most of the victims and undermines efforts to build positive peace. One of the central links between corruption and interpersonal violence comes via the gross income inequality generated by corruption. While discussing the theme of restoring trust for peace and security, the participants of the 14th International Anti-Corruption Conference sought to define the dynamic linkages between corruption, peace and security. They looked at the incidence and spread of violent conflict, poverty and organised crime as well as the emergence of the human rights framework and the globalised economy. Corruption was identified as a facilitator and generator of civil conflict, as an inhibitor of peace-building, as correlated with terrorism and as a facilitator of nuclear proliferation (Bangkok Declaration 2010).

Compared to many other African countries, Rwanda has apparently made progress in terms of controlling corruption. The country's leadership has manifested a political will to build a corruption-free nation. Different public institutions have been established with a mandate to enforce building

the rule of law, national integrity and restraining corruption. Now, the country is recognised to be the least corrupt country in the East Africa Community and is listed amongst the five least corrupt countries in Africa (Transparency International 2011). However, there is no doubt that extensive corruption is taking place in more hidden and less obvious ways. The Rwanda Bribery Index 2011 shows that most Rwandans (67.2%) think the country is only slightly corrupt and 4% think it is not corrupt at all, but 23.6% believe it is corrupt and 4.2% even consider it extremely corrupt (Transparency International Rwanda 2011:5). Although an impressive institutional and legal apparatus has been put in place with the aim of preventing and fighting corruption and promoting transparency, as Transparency International Rwanda (2011:4) relates, the persistence of corruption, especially at grassroots level, poses serious challenges to the development and overall governance of the country, hampers service delivery and might ultimately hinder poverty reduction efforts.

Anti-corruption efforts have been focused on prevention (e.g. by reducing the opportunities for individuals to request bribes), deterrence (e.g. by prosecuting those charged with corruption) and by values education. The third of these has been carried out, if at all, in a piecemeal and ad hoc fashion. A central concern of this study consists of promoting anti-corruption education as a peacebuilding tool i.e. as a way of preventing violence breaking out again, particularly in post-armed conflict situations. It is believed that anti-corruption education can build moral responsibility, which is the key pillar of fighting against corruption. The objective of anti-corruption education is “not to teach people to be good, but certainly to teach them skills to follow certain standards of conduct” (Palicarsky 2006, cited in Hallak and Poisson 2007:283). The goal of anti-corruption education is to build a demand for accountability. Anti-corruption education promotes values, attitudes and expectations that condemn corruption, and skills to resist it. Anti-corruption education develops people's understanding of their rights and responsibilities for preserving the public good (Transparency International n.d.).

A punitive legal framework to deter corruption and many of the preventive strategies to respond to corruption (e.g. regular audits, accounting controls, staff vetting) have been effectively established. However, intensive work is still to be done regarding values and ethics based options to deal with corruption. The present study considers that a values and ethics based approach should occupy a central place in efforts to combat corruption. Although some anti-corruption educational activities take place in a few schools and communities, the country remains with the need to effectively invest in promoting value and ethics approaches through promoting anti-corruption education. A well designed and consolidated strategy to re-instil a sense of ethics, responsibility, accountability and integrity is needed to complement and sustain the existing investments in fighting against corruption in Rwanda. In addition, as Rwanda is a young nation with a median population age of below 19, it is imperative to involve children and youth in the fight against corruption. To do so, developing and implementing an anti-corruption education for children is necessary because it would enable them to grow up being well informed about the problem, equipped with the capacity to resist it as well as committed to distance themselves from corrupt practices.

The research aim and specific objectives

The study was concerned with exploring the problem of corruption in Rwanda, reviewing the approaches to responding to it and proposing an alternative response. This alternative response makes use of and promotes ‘Ubumuntu’ which comprises of core ethical values embedded in and cherished by the Rwandan culture. The study had the overall objective to explore the problem of corruption and develop anti-corruption education as a way to building positive peace in Rwanda. It pursued the following specific objectives: (i) understand and discuss the concept of corruption; (ii) identify and comprehend the types, forms, extent, causes and consequences of corruption in developing countries with particular respect to Rwanda; (iii) demonstrate the connections of combating corruption with peacebuilding efforts; (iv) review the various methods of combating corruption and their effectiveness and reconsider the potential central role of education in fighting against corruption; (v) design an anti-corruption curriculum for Rwandan school children and run

trials of this in some schools in Rwanda; (vi) undertake a preliminary evaluation of the impact of the curriculum on the children's attitude and behaviours.

Description of the research processes

The research applied the following process of action research adapted from Gerald Susman (1983) which distinguishes five phases to be conducted within each research cycle:

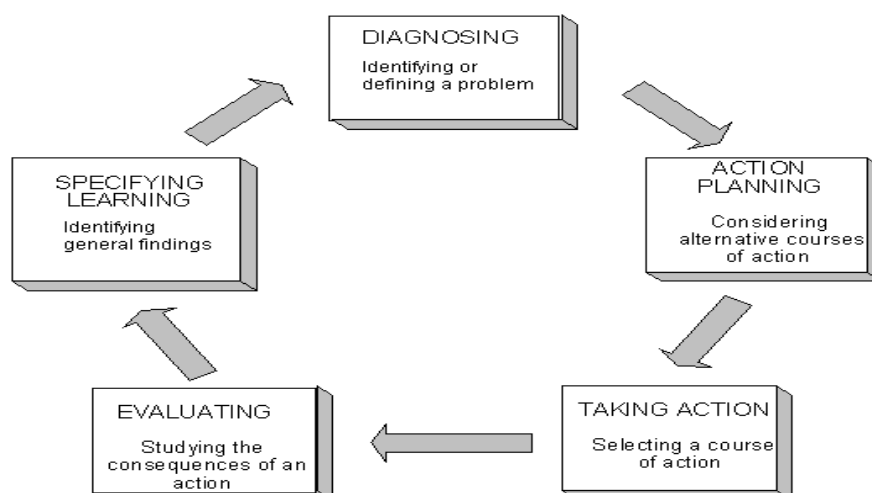


Figure 1: Detailed Action Research Model

Source: adapted from Susman 1983, cited in O'Brien 2001.

Diagnosing the problem

To understand the problem of corruption in Rwanda and identify its causes, underlying factors and consequences, this study used an exploratory approach. The rationale of using the exploratory approach was that there had not been any research previously conducted in Rwanda focusing on the connection between anti-corruption efforts and peacebuilding. In addition, the field of anti-corruption education for children in Rwanda is a new aspect of the anti-corruption campaign in the country. This exploratory part of the study was aiming at a better understanding of the issue of corruption in Rwanda, its destructive effect on the process of building positive peace in the country and the possibility of combating it through proposing appropriate and adequate anti-corruption education. The study, based on the results from the exploration, then intended to develop materials for promoting Anti-Corruption Education (ACE) and to advocate for involving children in the fight against corruption. The study explored a new angle of anti-corruption efforts which consists of educating children and helping them develop an anti-corruption mentality. As promoting ACE for children is a new aspect of the fight against corruption in Rwanda, it was necessary to do the exploration beforehand in order to build a strong research foundation according to which the proposed ACE could be piloted and evaluated during the second part of the study.

To collect the information, the study selected informants using a purposive sampling technique. This sampling was used to ensure that a variety of responses were obtained from a range of respondents from different areas of interventions. The sampling considered the necessity of involving multiple levels of society and reaching cross-sectors agents. For a study on a multi-level, cross-cutting and dangerous phenomenon like corruption, it was considered necessary to collect data from multi-level actors across various sectors. The study sample comprised of participants classified into four categories: participants from governmental institutions, non-governmental actors, anti-corruption professionals (from the Office of the Ombudsman) and people's representatives, and members of APNAC Rwanda (the Rwandan Chapter of the African Parliamentarians Network Against Corruption).

The problem diagnosing step was entirely qualitative. To collect useful data, the study used focus group discussions, focus group interviews and individual interviews. The compilation and analysis of the data used a content analysis method.

During the exploratory step, it was observed that the concept of corruption is mostly correlated with politics and this makes it a sensitive issue. Additionally, corruption is understood as something related to public governance. This reflects a reductionist understanding of corruption and seems to limit the energy deployed in fighting against the problem: corrupt practices occurring in the political sphere are highlighted, investigated and punished whereas the same issues occurring in other fields such as religion, commerce, sports, etc. seem to be ignored. There is a need to shift from a political to a social understanding of the concept of corruption as the problem might be encountered in all spheres of life. The participants agreed with the working definition proposed by the study which considers corruption *as a rotten and distorted mindset that leads people to live without truth and is characterized by actions aimed at gaining or accumulating wealth, power, honour and/or pleasure without humaneness and integrity*. This definition tries to include different aspects of corruption and invites an anti-corruption oriented education designed to avoid this social danger.

Although Rwanda has made remarkable progress in terms of fighting against corruption, the persistence of different forms of corruption was deplored by the participants at the group discussions. Bribery, embezzlement, favouritism, sex-based corruption, clientelism and nepotism were particularly emphasized by the participants as the most prevalent forms of corruption which are difficult to control in Rwanda. These practices seem to have been supported or justified by different cultural practices and the fact that they are done through tricky and clandestine ways.

The causes of corruption were important and challenging elements to discuss as this study was intended to suggest a remedy to this social danger. Discussing the causes of corruption was therefore one of the most critical sections of this study. The causes of corruption suggested by different scholars such as poverty, weak government, human greed, etc. did not convince this researcher. Rather, they were understood as either factors or consequences of corruption. I therefore introduced in the study a tentative comprehensive understanding of the causes of corruption which draws attention to and revisits what Gandhi calls the seven sins of the world. The seven sins, according to Gandhi are wealth without work; business without morality; science without humanity; politics without principle; religion without sacrifice; knowledge without character; and pleasure without conscience. The researcher briefly presented causal considerations of these 'sins' in relation to generating corruption. Though the participants of the group discussions generally agreed with considering these 'sins' as the causes of corruption, the study invites scholars to continue the debate on the causes of corruption.

The study, without intending to be exhaustive, also identified the factors and effects of corruption. For many of the participants, different corrupt practices have deep roots in Rwandan culture and are difficult to root out. Among other negative cultural practices, the participants most frequently pointed out and deplored the following: favouritism (especially a nepotistic cultural understanding), clientelism, jealousy (jargonised as "PHD" - pull him/her down-mentality), and the culture of giving gifts. In addition, greed, poverty, and a lack of honesty are other factors leading to corruption repeatedly pointed out during the focus group discussions and interviews. In this study the negative consequences of corruption were also explored. Apart from its damaging effects on the national political and socio-economic life, corruption has been recognised as one of the major contributing factors to the deplorable violent history of Rwanda which is marked by wars and the genocide against the Tutsis in 1994. The participants repeatedly pointed out that corruption undermines peacebuilding processes.

It was recognised that Rwanda has considerably invested in fighting against corruption, especially in establishing punitive and legal frameworks against corruption and setting up preventive and curbing mechanisms. However, with regard to the values-based approach and anti-corruption education in Rwanda, all participants agreed that existing educational anti-corruption strategies were still weak

and needed to be systematically planned and implemented. The participants were strongly convinced that prevention was cheaper than a cure and agreed with the Rwandan proverb which says that “a tree is straightened when it is still young”. In all the discussions sessions they repeatedly said: “Yes, education first; it should be the first strategy to deal with corruption”; “Education is necessary”; “Education has to play a prominent role in combating corruption”; etc. The religious leaders interviewed during the study underlined that “the role of education in combating corruption is definitely indispensable. If a child benefits from continuous anti-corruption teachings, he or she can grow up with attitudes and skills to resist corruption.” However, many of the participants insisted that education without punishment becomes ineffectual and useless. They supported the view that adults should be punished. This was hotly debated. Those who disagreed argued that there are people who, after being punished, do not change. Rather, they become more corrupt than they were before the punishment and then they invest in even trickier and more sophisticated ways of committing corrupt practices. The discussions ended by agreeing that punishment and education should be used together. It was suggested that the Office of the Ombudsman and other interested parties carry out research on the rate of relapse among people who were accused of corruption and sentenced in Rwanda. It was also suggested that the Office of the Ombudsman should orient most of its activities towards educating people. The fact that it is a hybrid ombudsman office, in charge of prevention through education as well as punishment, seems to negatively affect its effectiveness. It would be better to separate the assignments and establish an additional anti-corruption brigade in charge of punishing crimes of corruption.

The participants recognised that introducing anti-corruption education at an early age could have vastly positive results. Recalling the wise words of Paul Valéry, the French poet who noted that “The vase conserves the smell of the premiere liquor that it has contained”, one of the interviewed participants emphasised his belief in education. He reiterated the fact that education, starting at very young age, is a powerful tool to enable the society to create an anti-corruption mentality among present and future Rwandan generations. All participants in the group discussions acknowledged the important and powerful role that anti-corruption education for children could play in moving towards building a corruption-free Rwandan society. “Using education, we could help children to grow up with anti-corruption mind-set and thereby we would prevent many forms of corruption in our society”, asserted a participant in the group discussions held on 9 May 2014. Anti-corruption education for children should use language, content and methods adapted to their age and level of understanding recommended the participants at the discussion session of 27 August 2013.

Asked to comment on the existing anti-corruption education in Rwanda, the participants found that institutions such as the Office of the Ombudsman and Transparency International Rwanda have different educational activities on the ground. In general, though, the educational approach has been criticized and deemed to be only “a drop in the bucket”. Existing anti-corruption activities mainly focus on the legal framework and consequently educational activities related to the fight against corruption are generally aimed at increasing awareness about the law. There was a feeling that the anti-corruption educational campaigns organised by the Office of the Ombudsman needed to be improved, reinforced and expanded to a bigger audience countrywide.

Action Planning

The second part of the study reiterated the role of education in the fight against corruption, discussed an appropriate anti-corruption oriented education and proposed an anti-corruption curriculum applying the Ubupfura model. Education has been described as a powerful tool for change and transforming people’s mind sets as well as societal constructs and beliefs. Corruption has been presented as a moral and ethical issue. Considering this nature of corruption, education was recommended to be an effective alternative response to this destructive social phenomenon. It was confirmed that an anti-corruption oriented education could enable the upholding of ethical

values and, therefore, develop capacities in people to resist and disassociate themselves with corrupt practices among its beneficiaries.

In this regard, a curriculum under the title of “*Nibakurane Ubupfura*” (Let them grow up with Ubupfura) was designed and trialled in three schools. The curriculum proposed by the study mainly encompassed the six core ethical values developed by the Josephson Institute which include trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, justice and fairness, civic virtue and citizenship as well as caring. In addition, the curriculum focused on the notion of corruption, its consequences and how to provide encouragement to resist and fight against it. The curriculum made use of the existing cultural resources, embedded in the Ubupfura philosophy, and previously developed anti-corruption education materials. The Ubupfura model portrays a noble person as understood by Rwandans. Ethically speaking, a noble person or Ubupfura-upholding person (called *Imfura* in Kinyarwanda) lives out anti-corruption ethical values and is ready to distance her/himself from and resist corrupt practices. According to the NURC (n.d:20), a noble person is one who behaves well. He or she avoids injustice and is not selfish. A noble person is portrayed as follows: “He is the one who is not greedy, does not abandon you on the way when you are walking together, does not reveal secrets, keeps promises, does not steal even when he is hungry, comes to your rescue when attacked, remains humble when he is rich and looks after your orphans when you are no longer alive.”

Demonstrating the rationale of designing the curriculum for children, the study explained the reasons why Rwandan children should be involved in the combat against corruption: (i) children constitute the largest share of the Rwandan population (48% of the population are under 18 years old), this is a large portion of the population to consider if the country has to develop an effective anti-corruption strategy; (ii) a considerable number of children are playing an active economic role and, therefore, have to cope with corruption during daily business interactions; (iii) in one way or another, children are affected by corruption - as members of society, children also suffer from the harmful consequences of corruption and they might be the most likely victims of danger; (iv) children, if empowered, can play the role of change agents in their families and communities. They are the hope of their parents. Investing in them reaffirms and expresses the willingness and commitment to building a promising future. The Ubupfura model presupposes that children, if they are trained and supported in practicing Ubupfura values, could grow up not only with mind sets that resist corruption, but also as anti-corruption agents.

Taking action

The intervention undertaken consisted of teaching the curriculum. This educational material comprised three modules. Each of the modules contained four lessons. The following is an overview of the content of the modules:

- The first module – *Nibakurane Ubupfura I* – focuses on: understanding the concept of corruption, which goes beyond bribery; respect; trustworthiness – emphasizing truthfulness; and keeping and upholding Ubupfura values.
- The second module – *Nibakurane Ubupfura II* – contains anti-corruption teachings focusing on looking for healthy and clean wealth, responsibility, civic citizenship and trustworthiness (emphasizing faithfulness and promise-keeping).
- The third module – *Nibakurane Ubupfura III* – draws attention to values cherished and upheld by someone committed to disassociating themselves from corrupt practices, including caring for others, safeguarding human life, making ethical decisions, practicing the principles of impartiality and simplicity, readiness to make sacrifices, self-control and commitment to searching for the common good. The module ends with a story portraying a child (named Mizero) who is committed to practicing Ubupfura and anti-corruption values.

The experimental teachings of the curriculum took place as an out of school time (OST) programme. Without limiting its content, ACE could be developed for and implemented in formal and informal educational settings. During the research, the lessons were conducted in a non-formal education setting. The trial of the educational material was conducted from May to November 2013. In order to have the content reflect the realities of society, visits were organized and resource persons were invited to the school to talk to children and facilitate discussions and exchanges on civic citizenship and different corrupt practices existing in their localities. Six month after the experimental intervention, a preliminary evaluation was conducted in order to assess the effect of the curriculum on its beneficiaries.

Evaluation

To assess whether the intervention had the intended effect on children's attitudes and behaviours, a preliminary evaluation was undertaken. In order to collect useful data for evaluating the intervention, the experimental/control-group, post-test-only model was used. It consisted of a comparative analysis between the data collected from both groups. The comparison applied a chi-square test of independence. It primarily focused on orientation (attitudes, behaviour, and expressed commitment) and social interactions and actions. This was done through twelve different pre-determined evaluation activities. These activities enabled observing attitudes and behaviours of the participants from both groups. In addition, observations and reactions from parents and *Nibakurane Ubupfura* (Let them grow up with Ubupfura) facilitators were collected and complemented the evaluation exercises.

Specifying learnings from the research process

In many cases, observations of children from both groups tended to suggest that the participants from the experimental groups were more likely to resist corruption or to have an attitude that condemned corrupt practices than those from the control groups. However, although differences were recognised among the children in the different evaluation activities, the evaluation exercises revealed that children from both groups could easily recognise and disapprove of corrupt practices.

From the evaluation and throughout the intervention, it was realised that children may know and recognise corrupt acts but lack capacity to resist them. Thus, in addition to the knowledge and recognition of corrupt practices, children need to exercise and apply the knowledge in order to develop and anchor attitudes and behaviours that resist corruption. From this observation, it is arguable that knowledge alone is not enough to form character, develop attitudes and generate a behaviour: there is a need to keep the knowledge continually practiced. This is the reason why the parents and teachers recommended that the *Nibakurane Ubupfura* trainings should be continually held in order to successfully mould the anti-corruption mind sets among the children. Therefore, a practice or exercise component has to be added to the KAB (Knowledge – Attitude – Behaviour) model and then becomes KEAB (Knowledge-Exercise-Attitude-Behaviour) model of character education.

Looking at the different testimonies collected from parents and teachers on the impact of the anti-corruption curriculum on the children who participated in the trial, there is evidence that the curriculum has potentialities to transform and build anti-corruption mind sets among children. However, as parents have repeatedly urged, there is a need to keep children in training for a long time, helping them to exercise the values learned from the teachings and to apply them in their daily lives. The researcher agrees with the parents' concern, which converges with one of the lessons from research on peace education conducted by Salomon (2013:4) concluding that "short-term intervention usually yields only short-term effects. Desired changes of hearts and minds need continuous reinforcement and scaffolding".

Outcomes and implications of the research

The anti-corruption education curriculum designed, tested and evaluated is the tangible result of action research. The curriculum was developed with content and teaching methods appropriate to the children's age. It is the first educational material of this kind developed for Rwandan children in the field of anti-corruption.

The study also revealed theoretical implications in the area of corruption and anti-corruption: through its tentative efforts to find a comprehensive meaning of corruption, the study tried to feed the discussions on the concept. It is argued that the way corruption is understood influences the curative measures undertaken or being prioritized to combat it. For example, in this study, the impairment of integrity has been highlighted as one of the pivotal elements to look at while conceptualising and describing corruption. Therefore, anti-corruption oriented education was presented as a powerful and effective means of dealing with corruption through restoring and building integrity among people regardless of their ages and with particular emphasis on reaching children and helping them grow up with humanness and integrity. Another important theoretical implication of the study consisted of considering the seven sins of the world according to Gandhi as the causes of corruption. Without intending to fill the gap realised in discussions about the causes of corruption, the study would like to invite the academic world to continue this important debate.

With its intention to develop and promote a proactive anti-corruption educational alternative as a way of moving towards positive peace, the study would like to have different policy implications in the area of fighting against corruption and peacebuilding in Rwanda. The section on the linkage between anti-corruption and peacebuilding reiterated the necessity of considering the combat against corruption as a way of building peace in a society. The study would like to alert peacebuilding practitioners to the importance of undertaking anti-corruption initiatives if they aim at moving their society towards sustainable positive peace. Applying a holistic approach and considering a community as a whole seem to be recommended in order to ensure the effectiveness of the anti-corruption initiatives. In addition, the study would like to draw attention to the importance of involving children in the fight against corruption, equipping them with the capacities to resist corruption and enabling them to develop with a corruption free mindset. With children, it could be easy and effective to reach the whole community. It is necessary to involve children in the fight against corruption not only because they constitute the majority of young societies, as it is the case in Rwanda, but also they are potential agents for social transformation and are easy to prepare for the needed change.

Another implication of the study that deserves attention is the use of the existing cultural resources within a society such as Ubupfura and other social values and wisdom in responding to social problems. Cherished by Rwandan society, Ubupfura ethical values are welcomed and supported by every family in Rwanda. Parents were very supportive and, throughout the study, manifested their interest and willingness to having their children grow up with Ubupfura ethical values. Therefore, applying the Ubupfura model in Rwanda could gain much support from almost all community members and can significantly contribute to the process of rooting out corruption with minimal obstacles.

The study attempts to make a contribution to the fight against corruption as a means to build a just and peaceful society, with a particular focus on Rwandan society. Its main contribution is perhaps the awareness raised on involving children and helping them grow up with a commitment to resist and disassociate themselves from corrupt practices. It is our hope that the study has inspired new perspectives on the struggle against corruption and its meaning and implications for moving Rwandan society toward sustainable positive peace. For example, on 17 June 2015, the Rwandan Senate convened a consultative meeting on national anti-corruption strategies. The resolutions that the participants (including officials from different ministries, members of parliament and members of the civil society) drew included teaching young Rwandans about the ills of corruption. They reiterated the imperative restoration of the culture of Ubupfura and called relevant institutions such

as the Ministry of Education, the Office of the Ombudsman, faith based organisations and other members of civil society to promote the culture of integrity among all Rwandans through education which should begin from childhood.

Challenges and opportunities of the research

The study encountered the following challenges:

- *Availability of participants and maximising their active participation:* Because of busy agendas of the participants to the discussions and interviews, it was difficult to arrange the meetings for the data collection purposes. Arranging some of the group discussions and interviews required undertaking administrative processes which sometimes took a long time. The same challenge was also a reality during the trial intervention. The curriculum facilitators - who should inevitably play active roles - had other tasks to accomplish as well: as regular class teachers, they were overloaded by their daily responsibilities and sometimes had difficulties to find time to prepare for the Ubupfura sessions, which were organised after school time.
- *Fatalistic beliefs, pessimistic understandings and lack of a firm commitment to take on risks* and the responsibility of deciding and moving towards the desired future were found among many of the members of society vis-a-vis the problem of corruption: For example, there were many who considered corruption a problem with very deep roots which would be impossible to root out. Because of the fatalistic beliefs and lack of hope, some of the parents considered the teachings as a waste of time and were not motivated to send their children to the class regularly.
- *Limited resources:* The study required much more human and financial resources than available.
- *Time constraints:* The study was time consuming and required patience of the researcher. This kind of research necessarily involves community members and takes into consideration views of participants regardless of their social, economic, or political status and background. Among other principles of ethics in action research presented by Richard Winter (1996, cited in O'Brien 2001), the researcher must "make sure that the relevant persons, committees and authorities have been consulted, and that the principles guiding the work are accepted in advance by all. In addition, all participants must be allowed to influence the work, and the wishes of those who do not wish to participate must be respected".

Though the study faced the above mentioned challenges, it took advantage of the political will manifested by Rwandan politicians and the increased awareness of the negative effects of corruption and a commitment to fight against it. The Office of the Ombudsman and APNAC-Rwanda provided the study with institutional support, especially in organising group discussions/ interviews and the tour held on 3 December 2013. In addition, the use of the cherished Rwandan cultural values (Ubupfura) has supported the research fieldwork and trial interventions. Also, the nature and perspective of this research on anti-corruption and peacebuilding, which is more proactive than reactive and involves children, made it less sensitive. The optimism and hope that characterise children helped respond to the pessimism and fatalism among parents and other adult participants.

An assessment of the action research process

Looking at the nature of peacebuilding and anti-corruption work, which are continuous processes and require active participation of beneficiaries, action research is an appropriate tool to consider while working with and alongside a community. Done in spiral cycles, action research continually and

gradually enlightens efforts to respond to a real problem and informs what could be the next step. For example, the present study realised that teaching Ubupfura to the children only is not sufficient; it therefore recommends having a similar curriculum for adults as well, after the first implementation of the Ubupfura curriculum for young people. Based on the first cycle of the research, the same Ubupfura curriculum used for children will be adapted for community members and church groups during the second cycle of the research. This will lead to developing a more holistic, community-based approach to the issue of corruption.

Action research creates an opportunity to have people – including the researcher - think about a real community problem, explore resources existing in their communities, and play an active role in collaboratively responding to it. It inspires members of studied communities to take responsibility and own the process of addressing a problem, creatively engages them in finding appropriate solutions and establishing preventive or promotional mechanisms for ensuring the future they want. This is one of the lessons learned from the Ubupfura project, which uses existing cultural resources to reach out to communities from a local perspective. However, the success of this research approach requires building strong and permanent partnerships, particularly at community level.

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3

Chapter

Promoting nonviolent parenting among refugee mothers in Durban

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[reprinted with permission from *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk* 48(4), 2012]

Introduction

Corporal punishment can be defined as an action taken by a parent, teacher or caregiver resulting in physical pain or discomfort to a child with the aim of changing the child's behaviour. Those who support the use of corporal punishment believe that it is an appropriate and effective means of deterring misbehaviour and encouraging desired behaviour.

Supporters of corporal punishment argue that there is a clear distinction between punishment to control and correct a child, and physical abuse. However, corporal punishment can easily turn into abuse and some of its opponents (e.g. Coleman et al 2010) argue that any corporal punishment is by definition abusive. Durrant (2005:50) cautions that corporal punishment and physical abuse lie on 'a continuum of violence and that is not possible to draw a line that distinguishes where punishment ends and abuse begins'.

The author's disciplinary base is conflict resolution and peace studies and a brief explanation of relevant peace concepts is relevant. A social work perspective is provided by Chetknow-Yanoov (1997). The term conflict refers to differences of interest between individuals, such as a parent and a child, and groups. It is inevitable, common and is normally solved without recourse to violence. Violence involves harming others in the pursuit of one's own interests. It may involve physical actions (including corporal punishment) but also words, attitudes, structures or systems that cause physical, psychological, social or environmental damage and thus prevent people from reaching their full human potential. There are a range of views concerning whether and when violence can justifiably be used. In terms of parenting, those in favour of corporal punishment believe it is an effective way of teaching respect and right behaviour. Those against its use argue that it is not effective in these respects and in fact educates children to use violence. More fundamentally, they believe it violates the principles of nonviolence as a way of life which emphasizes such values as patience, love and forgiveness.

Conflict management focus on preventing a conflict moving into violence e.g. by separating the conflicting parties in the hope that a resolution can be achieved. Nonviolent conflict resolution focuses on finding solutions which both parties are willing to accept, thus 'solving' the conflict and achieving a sustainable peace. Conflict resolution is based on mutual respect, self-awareness and effective communication but may do little for the relationship between the parties even though they may be satisfied with the outcome. Conflict transformation tries to restore a good relationship or to build one if did not originally exist.

A major assumption in peace studies is that peace and nonviolence can be learned and violence unlearned. Parents can learn to bring up their children using nonviolent methods and children can learn to interact non-violently with others. The aims of this study are to determine the attitudes and behaviour of a sample of refugee mothers concerning the use of corporal punishment and to then design and implement a nonviolent parenting training course with a sample of these mothers. There

will also be a very preliminary assessment of the effects of the training on the mothers' attitudes towards disciplining their children.

Corporal punishment: extent, causes and consequences

The use of corporal punishment is widespread worldwide. Recent studies (e.g. Corrine et al, 2008; Hicks-Pass, 2009; Mulvaney and Mabert, 2010; Straus, 2010) estimate that as many as 90 per cent of parents in countries such as the US, the UK and New Zealand use corporal punishment, although support for its use is declining over time (Dawes et al, 2004: 32). Such high rates contrast with its minimal use in Sweden, which banned all forms of corporal punishment in 1979 and embarked on efforts to promote nonviolent disciplinary alternatives (see Durrant 2003).

Durrant (2005) provides compelling evidence that children who have been subject to corporal punishment are very likely, when they become adults, to approve of it and to use it in the upbringing of their own children. In addition to holding attitudes which support its use, a number of non-personal factors may encourage the use of corporal punishment. These are summarized in Table 1. More broadly, Grogan-Kaylor & Otis (2007) have examined the predictors of parental use of corporal punishment in the US context.

Table 1. Factors associated with the use and/or approval of corporal punishment

Factor	Suggested influence	Reference(s)
Cultural attitudes and religious beliefs	Conservative beliefs are associated with greater use and/or approval	Dawes et al (2004) Firmin & Castle (2008)
Ethnicity	Different ethnic groups have different levels of use and/or approval	Dawes et al (2004) Buldukoglu & Kukulu (2008)
Education	Lesser educated parents are more likely to use and/or approve	Chamberland & Clement (2009) Straus (2010)
Economic status	Low income households are more likely to use and/or approve	Gershoff (2002)
Level of violence between parents	More violent parental relationships are likely to result in use and/or approval	Corrine et al (2008) Dawes et al (2004)
Number of children	Parents with larger families are more likely to use and/or approve	Chamberland & Clement (2009) Straus (2010)
Gender aspect 1	Boys are more likely to receive corporal punishment than girls	Firmin & Castle (2008) Devaney (2008)
Gender aspect 2	Mothers use corporal punishment more frequently and fathers use it more intensely	Dawes et al (2004) Humphreys (2008)

Turning to the consequences of corporal punishment, the findings of academic studies concerning the effects of corporal punishment was the subject of a meta-analysis of 88 academic studies by Gershoff (2002). A summary of these results by Durrant (2005) is presented in Table 2. In short, the studies show overwhelming evidence of the negative effects of corporal punishment on child health, their behaviour as children and later as adults and on the relationship between parents and children.

The only positive outcome detected was immediate compliance by the child to corporal punishment or its threatened use.

Table 2. Developmental outcomes associated with corporal punishment

Outcome	Number of studies examining relationship	Number of studies confirming relationship
Child victim of physical abuse	10	10
Poorer child mental health	12	12
Poorer adult mental health	8	8
Impaired parent-child relationship	13	13
Lower moral internalization	15	13
Child aggression	27	27
Adult aggression	4	4
Child delinquent and antisocial behaviour	13	12
Adult antisocial behaviour		
Abuse of child or spouse in adulthood	5	5
	5	5

Source: Durrant (2005:73)

The effects of corporal punishment will also be felt at the macro-level. In his book *Parenting for a peaceful world*, Robin Grille provides persuasive evidence that ‘the collective childhood experience of a society is probably the single most important factor driving group decisions made at political, business and social levels’ (2005: 100). In the early 1900s, for example, the German model of child-rearing emphasised rigorous obedience training and minimal demonstrations of affection from infancy onwards. Grille argues that it was ‘this kind of childhood atmosphere ... taken to extremes, [that] gave rise to the hatred, the lack of compassion and the blind obedience that comprised the engine of the Nazi phenomenon’ (2005: 120). Lest it be objected that Nazi Germany is an extreme example, Grille also provides data from major studies of parenting styles in rural Yugoslavia during the 1930s, in Russia in the late 19th century, in various religious groups and in 20th century democracies such as France, the US and Sweden (2005: 99-174).

Corporal punishment in South Africa

While there have been a number of studies concerning corporal punishment in in South African schools - many following its banning in 2006 - there are relatively few which have examined corporal punishment by parents. There is, fortunately, one major study - *Partner violence, attitudes to child discipline and use of corporal punishment: a South African national survey* (Dawes et al, 2004) - data collection for which was carried out under the South African Social Attitude Survey. From this nationally representative survey, a sub-sample of 952 parents with children (of which 31 per cent were men and 69 per cent women) were surveyed in late 2003 with respect to their attitudes towards discipline and the use corporal punishment.

The major finding was that 57 per cent of parents with children under 18 reported having smacked their children at some time, with 33 per cent using severe corporal punishment i.e. using a belt or stick, as opposed to smacking. The most common age of children subject to smacking was three years; for those subject to severe corporal punishment, the figure was four years.

There were gender, age and ethnic variations. Of those parents who reported using mild corporal punishment (i.e. smacking) on their children in the last year, 70 per cent were women; parents

younger than 35 were less likely to use corporal punishment; and Africans and whites were more likely to use corporal punishment and to use severe corporal punishment (with a belt, stick etc.) than other coloured or Indians parents. While certainly lower than the rates reported earlier, the incidence of corporal punishment in South Africa was extensive. More significantly, a high proportion is severe corporal punishment and was practiced on very young children. These data say nothing about the use of corporal punishment within the refugee community but the levels of stress experienced by refugees, and particularly mothers, suggest that its incidence may well be at least as high as in South Africa as a whole.

Alternatives to corporal punishment

It is possible for parents who use corporal punishment to learn nonviolent alternatives. A number of recent studies (e.g. Grille, 2005; Wiggins et al, 2009; Barth, 2009; Latini, 2009) have argued that the practice of nonviolent parenting can reduce misbehaviour and equip children with self-confidence and responsibility. A number of nonviolent parenting programmes are offered in countries such as the US, the UK and Australia (e.g. the *Positive parenting curriculum package*, *The Incredible years parenting training programme* and *Parenting the strong-willed child*).

These typically emphasise communication between parents and children, spending quality time together and training children for the tasks they are expected to undertake. They aim to build parent-child relationships, positive behaviour and self-discipline in children. Evaluations of such programmes (e.g. Berard & Smith, 2008; Marcynyszyn et al, 2010; Letarte et al, 2010) typically use pre- and post-training questionnaires and found high levels of approval among participants. Many parents, it seems, have quite limited knowledge and skills in the area of conflict management and resolution as these apply to children.

The action research project

The overall objective of the research was to promote the use of nonviolent parenting methods among refugee mothers in Durban. Its specific aims were:

- To determine the attitudes and behaviour as regards parenting and discipline of a sample of mothers from the Durban refugee community (the exploratory phase).
- To design and implement a nonviolent parenting training course with a sample of refugee mothers (the planning and implementation phase).
- To carry out a very preliminary assessment of its effects on the attitudes of the mothers towards disciplining their children (the evaluation phase).

Accordingly, three stages of the research were planned:

- An initial questionnaire completed by 50 respondents and two focus groups with eight participants in each. These were designed to meet specific aim 1.
- Designing a training manual and training the two groups of eight in nonviolent parenting (in one three hour session each) to meet specific aim 2.
- An evaluation session of one hour to meet specific aim 3.

Convenience sampling was used to select 50 mothers from Emmanuel Cathedral (Catholic) and Durban Mission churches with one or more children aged between two and ten years. The questionnaire was printed in English and Swahili and centred on their attitudes towards corporal

punishment and the frequency and intensity with which they use it. The survey took place in June, 2011. From the initial sample, 16 volunteers (eight from each church) were sought to participate in the focus groups (in July, 2011), training (in September, 2011) and evaluation (in October, 2011). Copies of the questionnaire, focus group questions, the training manual and the evaluation questions are available on request. Ethical clearance was granted by the Ethics Committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal and its strict guidelines were followed throughout the project.

Findings on child discipline practices

Data from the initial questionnaire:

The initial group of 50 mothers originated from the Democratic Republic of Congo (35), Zimbabwe (10) and Burundi (5); almost all had been in South Africa for less than five years and 21 for less than two years. They had an average of 2.4 children with an average age of 5.1 years and found life very stressful, mainly due to economic hardship and the residential conditions under which they lived.

The 50 mothers displayed wide variation concerning their use of discipline methods and different methods were used according to the circumstances. Sixteen used beating and another nine used yelling as their most common method, while 23 used talking and ten used 'other' methods. Fifteen respondents said that they used corporal punishment every day or most days and another 10 once a week, while eight mothers said that they never used it. As to whether corporal punishment was necessary in bringing up children, 19 said yes (of which nine felt this very strongly), 19 had mixed feelings and 12 said it was not necessary (five very strongly).

Forty respondents indicated that corporal punishment had important positive outcomes in terms of teaching children discipline, good behaviour and respect. In the words of one respondent:

Corporal punishment is important in bringing up responsible children. If you do not discipline your children at the early age, you are not doing any good the future society. Children must be disciplined, so we can have a society where there is respect.

Respondents had varying views on the negative consequences of corporal punishment respondents but a number suggested that children subjected to corporal punishment might develop a sense of mistrust and sometimes hatred towards their parents. There was also a sense that children might behave well out of a fear of corporal punishment but then behave badly when their parents were not around.

An open-ended question asked the respondents for the most important reason that parents (not necessarily themselves) used corporal punishment. Twenty said that the Bible teaches it, 15 that children need to be controlled or they will 'take over' and 10 because it promotes good behaviour.

Data from focus group discussions:

The two focus groups comprised eight members each drawn from volunteers who completed the questionnaire and were held to explore attitudes and behaviour concerning the discipline of children in more detail. Each group lasted about 90 minutes. The respondents' own words are used as much as possible to report typical responses, with alternative views noted. Four questions were devised following analysis of the initial questionnaire responses and the researchers, in accordance with the principles of focus group methodology, played only a facilitating role.

Question 1. What methods do you use to discipline your children and why do you use them?

Most participants agreed that the use of corporal punishment can deter children from misbehaving, can teach them to be respectful and to grow up to be responsible adults and was often suggested as proof that the parent loved the child.

I think that there is no better way of disciplining a child than to use corporal punishment. As you know, many of the children are difficult and just to say 'Do not do this' does not work. Children won't listen. The only thing to make your child understand in some instances is to beat them.

We punish our children because we care about them.

In contrast, a minority of participants supported the idea of communication as the best means of correcting a child.

Communication can assist children getting the message better than beating them. Sometimes you will find parents who just beat their children without even telling them why they are beating them. How do you expect a child to behave well while the child cannot know what his/she has done wrong?

A minority of the mothers argued that under no circumstances the child should be subjected to corporal punishment. They believed that corporal punishment is violence against a child and therefore cannot be tolerated.

It is very bad to hit a child any time he misbehaves. Everybody makes mistakes. So if we say that everyone who make mistakes or does something wrong, must be [physically] punished, it is not good. All people, even children, must be given opportunity to correct themselves through advice.

While corporal punishment and communication emerged as the major methods used in disciplining children, some other methods were also used. There included holding back some privileges from a child e.g. forbidding the child from playing with other children or watching TV, withholding food.

Question 2. Do you think the bible encourages you to use corporal punishment on your children?

Many participants argued that corporal punishment is strongly recommended and even commanded in the Bible. The relevant verses are Proverbs 22:15: 'Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him'. Proverbs 23:13-14: 'Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with the rod, he will not die. Punish him with the rod and save his soul from death'. Proverbs 13:24: 'He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him or punish him'.

For some participants - and this was particularly true in the Durban Mission focus group - that was the end of the discussion.

Those parents who do not discipline their children have not used their responsibility according to what God has given them. In my view, all parents should punish their children, not for the sake of hurting them, but to help them grow up as good and responsible persons.

Others, however, indicated that it is still up to the parents to make choice to use it or not:

I do not mind to whether someone disciplines his/her child. What matters for me is that my children are disciplined and grow up with respect. Some of the parents prefer to use corporal punishment and others not. What works for them, they should apply that.

In contrast to the above views, a few of the mothers argued that whether the Bible encourages the use of corporal punishment on children or not, they did not believe it is an effective way of disciplining children; some of this minority reject it because it is violent.

Question 3. Can you think of any negative aspects of using corporal punishment?

Most participants agreed that the use of corporal punishment has negative aspects, but that it all depends on how corporal punishment is administered, particularly its intensity and the frequency of its use. All respondents agreed that if corporal punishment is over-used, it can have harmful consequences. The most common reason given, incidentally, was not because of negative impact on the child but because it can lead to a situation where children will no longer care about punishment and therefore will no longer obey parents' instructions. Longer term impacts were also identified:

Children who are subjected to physical punishment tend to be more aggressive than the children who are not. You see that children who are subject to it are likely to grow up using violence on other children at home and even at schools.

In my view, too much beating has serious consequences. Some children keep what their parents do to them in their memory and when they grow up, they treat their own children in the same way. Also sometimes ... when they become adults they end up beating their parents.

Question 4. Do you know of alternative methods of disciplining children other than using corporal punishment?

Even those participants who supported the use of corporal punishment were able to suggest alternatives to it. Communication was by far the most important of these alternatives:

Communication builds the society, not only for the adult but also for the children. Imagine a family or a society where there is no communication between parents and children or a family where there is no communication between parents.

For me, I use communication to educate my children. Punishment only comes when I see that the child repeats the mistakes I already discussed with him/her. We all need to be told in a nice way, not always to be brutalized.

The researchers probed to find out why, if participants saw communication as effective, they continued to use corporal punishment. Respondents indicated that corporal punishment is a quick way of punishing a child and some admitted that they used corporal punishment out of anger and frustration.

Sometimes, it is out of anger we beat our children. Sometimes you tell a child and the child does not understand. You come home tired and with other many other things in your life and when children start misbehaving then you lose your mind.

Some mothers indicated that after hitting their children, they often regretted their actions. Some indicated that they ask their children to forgive them after using corporal punishment.

Training in nonviolent alternatives

The training course was devised after analysing the survey and focus group responses. Each group comprised the same members as the focus groups and lasted for around three hours. Each was

based on participatory learning methods and group discussion using the training manual and comprised five sections:

1. Understanding corporal punishment
2. The Bible and corporal punishment
3. The negative consequences of corporal punishment
4. Building good parent-child relationships
5. Some nonviolent discipline techniques.

Section 1 examined the view that corporal punishment is part of a continuum of violence and that is difficult to draw a line that distinguishes where punishment ends and abuse begins. Role plays – with participants taking the roles of parents and children – were used to give a window into the way both categories feel about corporal punishment.

In section 2, participants considered in small groups whether the Bible verses mentioned earlier were a good foundation on which to base child discipline practice. New Testament passages about how we are meant to relate to other people, including our children, were discussed. During plenary sessions, it emerged that participants had come to agree that the Bible does not teach or promote the use of corporal punishment.

Sometimes people turn the Bible up and down. You know even in Congo, some people used the Bible to kill other people..... This question of corporal punishment and the Bible is somehow misused by some of the church leaders.

Section 3 considered the consequences of corporal punishment and many expressed surprise that any lasting negative effects could occur; that said, they did not argue against this evidence. A representative comment (from a non-user of corporal punishment) is as follows:

Old people say that the stick can break the bone, but can never break the behaviour. We can beat our children as much as we want. But if you do not use appropriate methods [of discipline], our children will never listen to us. The use of corporal punishment on children can affect our relations with them ... we are creating enemies with those whom we want as our best friends.

In section 4, participants were asked to suggest ways of building good relationships between parents and children. Four methods were suggested and discussed:

- Show them the sort of behaviour you want from them by modelling it in your life
- Show them that you love them by spending quality time with them and by hugging them a lot
- Listen carefully in order to understand children what they need
- Negotiate with them.

The final section was for the participants to propose some nonviolent discipline techniques they could use. A number of nonviolent discipline methods were suggested and discussed by participants.

A very preliminary evaluation

One month after the training, all but one of the participants came together to discuss two questions:

- In what ways (if any) did the training change your ideas about corporal punishment?
- In what ways do you intend to behave different as a result?

During the evaluation process, all of the participants agreed that the training workshop had led to important and changes in their views about corporal punishment. They agreed that if nonviolent alternatives were properly applied, it would assist in building good relationships between parents and children which they saw as a central objective in parenting. This, it seems, was the main thing learnt from the training.

Some typical statements are as follows:

I did not think that beating your own child was a problem and has an impact on the child. I usually thought that corporal punishment is the only way we can as parents make children do things that we want, but after [the training], I went home and discussed with my husband. I discovered that corporal punishment is violence.

For me, I never previously beat my children when one misbehaves. I just talk to him and explain. The workshop has helped me to do this better.

You see, I have children who do not understand, especially the boy child. You cannot tell him to do this and do that [because] he just does something else. From the day of the training, I started applying some of the skills presented. Maybe it will work.

As to the second question, all participants said that they intended to behave differently. When asked what they meant by this, most of them indicated that they wanted to learn to communicate with their children. They were concerned to build good relationships with their children which would then allow them to have dialogue with their children about behavioural issues when the need arose, and thus do away with the use of corporal punishment.

Three issues concerning the reliability of these results need to be considered. First, there may be selection bias, in that those who volunteered for the training may have been predisposed towards nonviolent parenting. However, there was a wide range of opinions among those who completed the initial questionnaire and also among those who volunteered to participate in the focus groups and training. Second, it may be that the evaluation responses were what the respondents believed the researchers and the other participants wanted to hear. Our strong impression, however, is that these responses were genuine and that their eyes had been opened to alternative ways of parenting which they became keen to adopt. Many had been unhappy using corporal punishment, and especially when they did so in anger, but did not see any alternative. Third, the evaluation can only be described as very preliminary; the real impact of the training will only be felt in the weeks, months and years ahead.

Conclusion

This chapter has reported an intervention to build skills in nonviolent parenting among a small sample of refugee mothers in Durban. There was an apparent shift towards nonviolent methods of disciplining children following the training, at least as expressed verbally by the participants.

If the research of Grilles and others is to be believed, one way of building a more peaceful society is to bring up children using nonviolent methods of discipline. This study suggests that mothers can be educated in such alternatives and seem to be very open to adopting them. It seems that deep down, they do not want to use corporal punishment but they lack the knowledge of alternatives and are fearful that such methods may not work.

One way of spreading this message is by offering such workshops to church-based groups of mothers. Given the very high levels of church affiliation and attendance in South Africa, and an ethos which at its best promotes gentleness, patience and nonviolence, churches are the ideal institution through which to promote nonviolent parenting.

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4

Chapter

Developing social entrepreneurs to reduce poverty among unemployed youth

Gnanam Pillay

Introduction

In 2010 I was working at Thekwini Further Educational and Training (FET) College in Durban where I was responsible for all the skills programmes. Two of those programmes, the IT training for unemployed youth at the Melbourne Campus and the SMME (small, medium and micro-sized enterprises) training programme at the Asherville Campus, forced me to question how we develop young people who came from marginalised communities. The SMME programme was a government-funded programme intended to train unemployed people as entrepreneurs through a one-month course in financial management and business planning. Despite the College earning well through this project, I was disturbed because the training reminded me of a conveyor belt where groups of people came to the College, were taught about business for a month, and then sent out to run their enterprises or cooperatives with no further support. The statistics on SMME failure rate reaching 80% (Mompei 2010) came as no surprise to me given the one-month training session and numerous challenges that start-up enterprises face (Rogerson 2008; Booysens 2011). Despite the government's attempt to support the development of entrepreneurship in order to address social issues such as high levels of unemployment, inequality and poverty, the actual implementation of the programme was flawed since there was no mentorship and support for these SMMEs and cooperatives once they exited the programme at the FET Colleges.

The IT project at the College was also government-funded with the intention of training about 250 learners a year on software engineering, network engineering and data based processing in order to support the economy and compete in the global market. The table below gives some examples of how ICTE could be a driver of development:

Table 1: ICTE and general economic development in KZN

Field	Support
Education	Creating virtual links with industry and international partners to enhance the level of education available to students Can be used to create learning pathways in rural areas to increase the reach and effectiveness of teaching and learning
Health	Can improve access to medical records and improve the use of technical equipment Can be used to provide a host of medical services to underserved rural areas
SMME trade	Can help unlock global trade opportunities for SMMEs in all sectors through portals, e-business local representation and international collaboration
Government	E-governance can create transparency in government services by allowing integrated

	community participation and extending efficiency and reach of services
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This project involved a partnership among the FET Colleges in KwaZulu-Natal, the Moses Kotane Institute and the National Institute of Information Technology (NIIT-India) to deliver the IT training. The Moses Kotane Institute is a non-profit organisation that was set up to promote science and technology among the youth in KwaZulu-Natal and the National Institute of Information Technology (India) is ranked among the top training organisations in IT worldwide and has projects in Africa, China and South America whilst working with Microsoft to develop new products (Pillay 2014).

It was anticipated that those who qualified would enter the workplace and provide high end services to industry, government and communities. Some of the graduates were absorbed by large companies and government but the majority ended up as sales people and cashiers at retail stores because there were not enough jobs in the work place. However, I felt that the students should be encouraged to create their own businesses – not just selling hardware, but rather developing software applications that could be used to promote the wellbeing of the communities from which they came in order to address social challenges such as high unemployment rates and inequality.

The concept of social entrepreneurship

I began researching the impact social entrepreneurship had on marginalised communities around the world. Although there are many ways in which social entrepreneurship has been defined, the common thread that runs through all the definitions is that it adds social value through innovative strategies. Dees (2001) defines social entrepreneurs as ‘change agents’ who create social value by:

- *adopting a mission to create and sustain social value (not just private value);*
- *recognizing and relentlessly pursuing new opportunities to serve that mission;*
- *engaging in a process of continuous innovation, adaptation and learning;*
- *acting boldly without being limited by resources currently in hand, and*
- *exhibiting heightened accountability to the constituencies served and for the outcomes created.*

In many ways, social entrepreneurs and commercial entrepreneurs share the same characteristics. They actively seek new opportunities, they are innovative and they take risks - what separates them is that social entrepreneurs have a strong social agenda while commercial entrepreneurs focus on maximising financial profit for themselves and their shareholders.

The literature on entrepreneurship is very large and growing, but clearly, the high failure rate of start-ups and micro-enterprises suggests that a different approach is needed in addressing these challenges. Examples of social entrepreneurship such as the Barefoot College in Rajasthan, India, the Grameen Bank and the Bangladesh Rural Action Committee (BRAC) in Bangladesh, the Parquesoft Innovation Park in Colombia and Sekem in Egypt demonstrate that social entrepreneurship not only makes a difference in the lives of the people it supports, but that it creates sustainable business models as well.

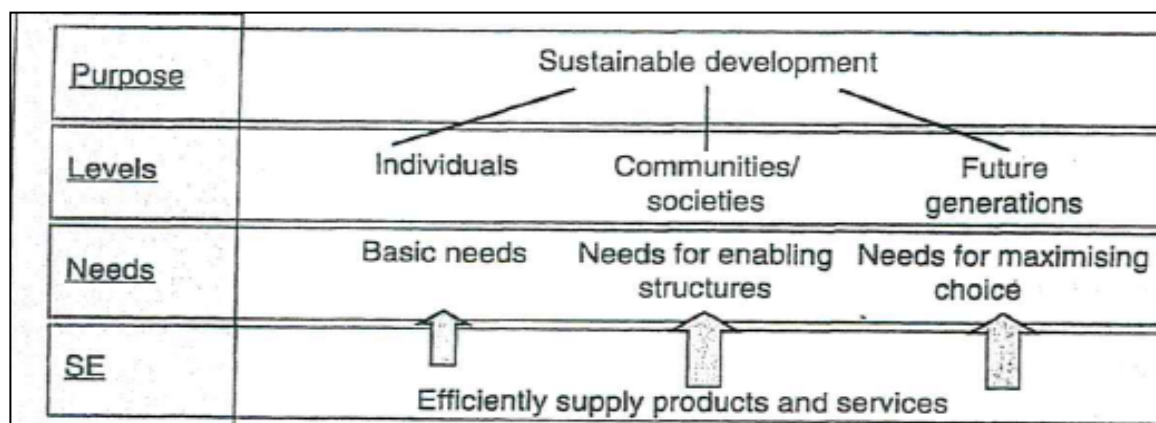


Figure 1. The impact of social entrepreneurship leading to sustainable development

Source: Seelos and Mair (2006).

This illustration by Seelos and Mair (2006) shows how social entrepreneurship contributes towards sustainable development by addressing the needs of marginalised communities at different levels.

Having decided on my research topic as *‘Developing social entrepreneurship in IT at FET Colleges in KwaZulu-Natal’* the next step was to formulate the key research question and the research design. Given the socio-economic challenges as well as the high failure rate of start-up enterprises that we face in KwaZulu-Natal, I was interested in finding out whether social entrepreneurship could be used as a model to address these critical issues. Thus, in my research, the key question was *‘whether the social entrepreneurship model could be used effectively as an alternative to entrepreneurship to address social issues such as inequality, unemployment and poverty in marginalised communities’*.

Research Objectives

My research objectives were:

- First, to answer the research question mentioned above in order to address social and economic issues such as poverty, unemployment and inequality in KwaZulu-Natal. The goal was to explore social entrepreneurship as an alternative to mainstream business in order to address social issues faced by marginalized communities.
- Second, to investigate the possibility of implementing social entrepreneurship located in the field of IT at Further Education and Training Colleges in KwaZulu-Natal using an action research methodology.
- Third, to evaluate the implementation of this social entrepreneurship research. The research was evaluated using the five assets used by the sustainable livelihoods framework model, namely, physical, personal, financial, social and human assets as themes.
- Fourth, to inform policy and practice in social entrepreneurship, in order to benefit marginalised individuals and communities. (Pillay 2014)

Research Design

In terms of the research design, there was no doubt in my mind that the most appropriate methodology for my research was action research. Greenwood and Levin (2007) define action research in the following way:

Action Research is social research carried out by a team that encompasses a professional action researcher and the members of an organization, community or network ('stakeholders') who are seeking to improve the participants' situation. AR promotes broad participation in the research process and supports action leading to a more just, sustainable, or satisfying situation for the stakeholders.

In an overview of the methodical approach to Action Research, Rory O'Brien (2001) stresses the importance of 'co-learning' as a primary aspect of the research process. Action research combines action with systematic research in a collaborative manner (Reason and Bradbury 2008; Greenwood and Levin 2007; Stringer 2007) and addresses the 'gap' between theoretical knowledge and practical application (Reason and Bradbury 2008). In action research, the researcher and the research participants are regarded as equals and learn from each other. This is different from mainstream research methodologies where the social world is seen as static and scientific research is disengaged, creating a distance between the research and phenomena being observed, so that the phenomena become objects of the researcher's "gaze" (Pillay 2014).

Action Research resonates with social entrepreneurship since both are participatory, democratic and practical. Both, social entrepreneurship and action research use a 'bottom-up' strategy to address social issues (Stringer 2007; Reason and Bradbury 2008; Kemmis 2008; Bornstein and Davis 2010). Combining social entrepreneurship and action research is not new: a classic example is the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh that Muhammad Yunus started in 1983. Through his association with poor communities, Yunus identified a need for poor people to access bank loans for their livelihoods. Poor people in Bangladesh did not have access to normal bank loans because they lacked collateral and they were exploited by local moneylenders (Yunus 2007). The Grameen Bank provided micro-credit financing to poor women and radically changed – and challenged – the face of microcredit. Instead of asking for collateral, the bank depended on peer accountability to repay the loans they received (Reason and Bradbury 2008). The result of this venture was that the repayment rate for women entrepreneurs was 98,6% which eventually led to the bank itself becoming sustainable and independent of donors (Yunus 2007). Unlike normal banks, the Grameen Bank continued to evolve taking into account the needs of the most vulnerable and set up new institutions that provide services and support for them. This reflects the action cycle stages: identifying a challenge; thinking and planning a solution; implementing an intervention and reflection. Twenty years after the Grameen bank experiment started, it had created twenty-five organisations as part of the 'Grameen family of companies' that provide financial and other support for the most vulnerable communities in Bangladesh. According to the Economist (2012), the living standards of poor people in Bangladesh have risen despite the unstable political environment.

For my research, I used Earnest Stringer's (2007: 20) community- based participatory model since I felt that I needed to work collaboratively with the participants and build a network of relationships that would improve not only the lives of the participants, but the communities they come from as well. The three major stages include: *looking*, *thinking* and *acting* while observation and reflection are processes that occur as each major stage is worked through (Stringer 2007:7).

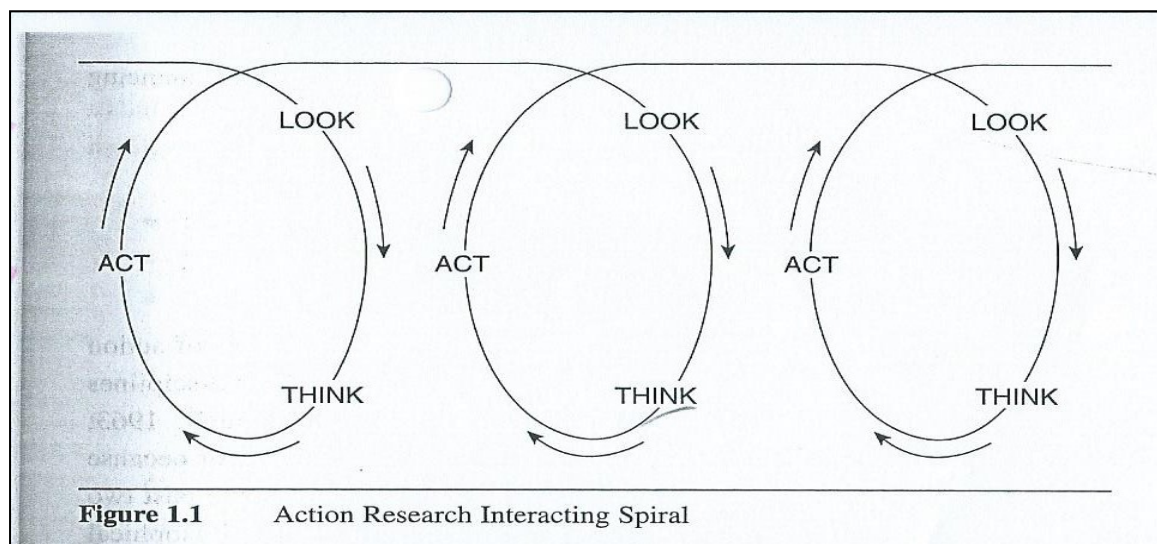


Figure 2: Stringer's Action Research Cycle

Source: Stringer (2007)

I adapted Stringer's model slightly so that I had *reflection* as the fourth stage. The adapted process involved the following stages:

Stage 1: Look: This stage involved the gathering of information and the defining and describing of the issue at hand. In terms of the actual research, the first stage of the cycle involved the participants and me discussing the research process as well as planning the eight different enterprises in the different areas. The participants had agreed to set up individual enterprises within the communities from which they came. Some of the information obtained in the research came from the interviews, but other information was derived from the focus groups as well as from observation within the communities involved.

Stage 2: Think: At this stage, the issues were explored and analysed. This stage also looked at how issues were interpreted, explained and understood. In the second stage of the research, participants were requested to conduct a needs analysis within their respective communities in terms of the kind of IT intervention that would be needed to assist the people in the area. I accompanied the participants to meetings with stakeholders such as ward councillors and community organisations in order to have a better understanding of the community structures and to support the participants. Our experiences and thoughts about these visits were then discussed in our focus group meetings that happened on a monthly basis.

Stage 3: Act: At this stage plans were developed, put into action and evaluated. Stage three involved the start-up phase of the enterprises. All the enterprises were linked to the Invotech Business Incubator at the Durban University of Technology to assist with starting the enterprises. Two of the enterprises had already started and we felt that working through the incubator would assist all of them to grow. However, the participants were not happy at the incubator and started working on their own. The two that had started were growing, even though the rate of growth was slow. Over the three years, possible changes were discussed within the group and put into action to assist the businesses to grow. By the end of the three years during which the research took place, only the two enterprises who had started first had shown signs of growth. However, the learning from the three years proved invaluable in terms of the kind of support systems needed to grow social enterprises. The lessons learnt from the research helped me to develop a new model for supporting social enterprises in communities.

Stage 4: Reflect: After implementation of an intervention had taken place, reflection on the intervention took place, changes were made and the process started again. There were two main

cycles in the research, but there were also many small cycles as people developed their businesses differently. According to the process, there was a continuous cycle of identifying key issues, exploring and analysing the key issues, implementing change and reflecting on the changes.

Sampling

Sampling for the research was purposive since all the participants were selected from the IT programme facilitated at the College. In the initial plan, I intended having sixteen participants in the research who would have been selected from two different FET Colleges. However, the logistics of having such a large sample would have compromised the research so I decided to reduce the number to eight participants from Thekwini College. By reducing the number and having just eight participants we obtained in-depth, rich knowledge of the participants, their communities and their enterprises. All the participants came from marginalised communities, some from townships and others from rural areas. There were three females and five males although one of the selection criteria indicated an equal number of both genders. This was because some of the female learners that were selected were not interested in being a part of the research.

Table 2: Participants in the research

Participant	Area	Enterprise
Participant 1: Male	Hammarisdale	Internet Café to support community and small businesses in Hammarisdale.
Participant 2: Male	Besters (Inanda)	Kuhlwakuse Trading Enterprise cc (registered business). Developing tourism in INK area and supporting entrepreneurs in KwaMashu to register their enterprises.
Participant 3: Female	Umlazi	Train teachers and students in using IT to support education in Engomyameni.
Participant 4: Female	Umbumbulo	Develop an IT hub/Internet café to support schools and community in the rural areas around Umbumbulo.
Participant 5: Female	Umbilo	Started with a recycling cooperative but changed to home-based care in Umbilo.
Participant 6: Male	Albert Park	Internet Café offering basic computer training to support the informal traders in the inner city.

Data Collection

Primary data was obtained through interviews and focus groups with the eight participants. The first interviews with students were conducted using semi-structured interviews that included a questionnaire in order to obtain information about the participants' background as well as their attitudes and interest in entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship. Further interviews and informal meetings were conducted with ward councillors, and with representatives of government departments, institutions of higher learning and community members. In the focus groups with participants we discussed the research process that included ethical issues, the action research cycles, as well as the development of the individual social enterprises in their respective areas. Each participant was tasked with developing an IT related enterprise within the community from which they came. As the research progressed, the focus groups became more informal and discussions

became more frank and open. We also started visiting one another in our respective homes and I was able to gain more knowledge of the structures of community life in townships and rural areas.

Secondary data was gathered by examining legislation affecting small businesses and cooperatives as well as government strategies which had been developed to address the challenges of skills shortages, unemployment and poverty, for example the Millennium Development Goals in relation to South Africa, the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) policy of the government and the National Skills Development III (NSDS3) Plan. Local and international research papers on social entrepreneurship were also read, analysed and linked to the research where possible.

I found that observation was another important way of gathering information at all times while conducting interviews with focus groups and with community members and other stakeholders. Through identifying with the participants and engaging with the community, I had the opportunity of 'blending' into the setting so that the body language of people, their behaviour and physical surroundings could be observed without being intrusive. I became a part of the research group and I was able to learn and contribute as an equal partner to the discussions and meetings.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are the cornerstones of successful mainstream research. Reliability refers to the measurement of a phenomenon giving the same results when repeated if the same instrument is used (Bush 2007; Bailey 2007; Somekh and Leweyn 2011). Validity refers to the ability of the research to demonstrate that the research question or phenomena that the researcher set out to investigate, has in fact, been addressed in the methodology and results. In mainstream research, theories and hypotheses are generated and tested using mainly quantitative data collection through instruments such as direct observation and questionnaires (Bailey 2007; Crook and Garret 2011). Steps are followed logically and the research has to show evidence of reliability and validity in order to be academically sound.

Although action research is just as rigorous as mainstream research, the concepts of reliability and validity are viewed through different lenses since action research is context-bound (Reason and Bradbury 2008; Stringer 2007). Action research is different from traditional research because it 'has different purposes, it is based on different relationships and has different ways of conceiving knowledge and its relation to practice' (Reason and Bradbury 2008). Instead of using the terminology of 'reliability' and 'validity' of mainstream research, action research uses terminology such as 'credibility', 'trustworthiness', 'transferability', 'dependability' and 'confirmability' to reflect rigour in the research. Stringer (2007) identified the following items that provide evidence of credibility in action research: prolonged engagement; persistent observation; triangulation; member checking; participant debriefing; diverse case analysis and referential adequacy. Because action research is context-bound and because the human experience, knowledge and behaviour is unpredictable and complex, it is difficult to generalise, but it may be possible if the situation is similar. For example, Greenwood and Levin (2007) refer to *transcontextual credibility* where meanings created in one context are examined for their credibility in another situation through conscious reflection on similarities and differences between contextual features and historical factors. The Mondragon model in Spain and the Barefoot College model in India for example, have been replicated in other areas indicating the possibility of transferability.

Evaluation

Through the focus groups and informal meetings, the participants and I evaluated the eight enterprises using the Department for International Development's (DFID's) Sustainable Livelihoods assets: financial, social, physical, human and personal. The reason for using the sustainable livelihoods assets was because the assets reflect the strengths of the individual or community which

are then used to build on in order to strengthen those particular individuals and communities. The new model combines the five assets of the sustainable livelihoods framework and action research process through mentorship and enterprise development over a period of two to three years until the enterprise is in a position to stand alone and become sustainable. This model is currently being used at the Centre for Social Entrepreneurship at the Durban University of Technology, Durban.

Kelly and Gluck (cited in Stinger 2007) propose evaluating action research projects against the following criteria:

- Pride: people's feeling of self-worth;
- Dignity: people's feeling of autonomy, independence and competence;
- Identity: people's affirmation of social identities (e.g. woman, worker, and so forth);
- Control: people's feeling of control over resources, decisions, actions, events and activities;
- Responsibility: people's ability to be accountable for their own actions;
- Unity: the solidarity of groups of which people are members;
- Place: places where people feel at ease; and
- Location: people's attachment to locales to which they have important historical, cultural or social ties.

Cuba and Lincoln (cited in Stringer 2007) include the following criteria:

- full participatory involvement;
- political parity;
- consensual, informed, sophisticated joint structure;
- conceptual parity; and a
- refusal to treat individuals or subjects as objects of study.

All the above criteria for evaluating action research were considered very relevant for my research and are encompassed within the five assets of the sustainable livelihoods framework.

Triangulation

Triangulation is used in a research to ensure that the research report provides an accurate report about the participants and what they say. In order to achieve this, various methods and sources are used to confirm data (Creswell 2007). In this research, data and information that was collected through interviews with participants was verified through interviews with community members and through direct observation by visiting sites and taking photographs to support the research.

Findings

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, the research was evaluated using the assets of the sustainable livelihoods framework that included the financial, physical, social, personal and natural assets of the participants and the communities from which they came. Of the eight enterprises that were planned, only two enterprises continued to grow in the three years of research. There were many factors that impacted negatively on the other six enterprises. The lack of access to finance, the lack

of proper infrastructure in some of the townships and rural areas as well as the lack of an efficient transport system were some of the factors that contributed to the failure of the start-up social enterprises. Ironically, the participants' social assets and the lack thereof played a more relevant role than financial assets in the development of the enterprises, for example the two enterprises that grew had greater social support than did the other ones. The lack of basic infrastructure in townships and rural areas as well as political agendas contributed negatively on the development of the other six social enterprises. All of them lived in very small or informal dwellings with very little or no support from family. In many cases they were the breadwinners and were expected to contribute toward the household expenses. All of them therefore found employment in the formal sector and even though their salaries were not big, they felt secure because they were employed. Differences between councillors and the chief of the areas also meant that there were delays in acquiring land or facilities where the enterprises could be set up in the rural areas.

Reflection on the research

Reflection played a very integral role in this action research, both for the participants and for me. Through the interviews, focus groups and informal meetings we began to co-reflect on events that unfolded and this strengthened the relationship between the participants and me which resulted in mutual trust and co-learning. The research itself was an incredible journey of learning and growing for me, especially with regard to the role that social entrepreneurship could play in addressing social challenges in KwaZulu-Natal. Despite the fact that only two enterprises grew and developed over the three years, what we learned during the time led to the development of a new model for developing social entrepreneurship. The end of the research cycle was actually the beginning of a new cycle of action. I conducted a pilot project with funds from the National Skills Fund (NSF) over a period of three years at Thekwini FET College, and I am currently using that model for the development of social enterprises in the footwear and leather sector as well as the clothing and textile sector, both at the Bhambayi informal settlement in Inanda and with students at the Centre for Social Entrepreneurship which we established at Durban University of Technology in Durban. The model combines action research with the sustainable livelihoods framework using a 'bottom-up' strategy to mentor and support enterprises in townships and rural areas. The fact that I am able to use my research in a practical way with marginalised communities gives me great joy.

Because the research was so new at the time, there were a few challenges. One of them was that there was no benchmark that I could refer to in KwaZulu-Natal regarding the development and implementation of social entrepreneurship. Unlike entrepreneurship, about which much research already exists in KwaZulu-Natal, research into social entrepreneurship in South Africa is still in its beginning. Much of my literature for social entrepreneurship was derived from universities outside South Africa and I visited social entrepreneurship models such as the Barefoot College in India where I was able to gain a substantial amount of knowledge in this field. One of the most powerful moments was when I showed the participants a video of the Barefoot College in January 2013 after I visited the rural College in Tilonia, India. The video showed village women solar engineers who lived at the Barefoot College for six months to learn how to construct the parts and solar power their villages. I had met thirty-two women when I was there and while chatting about the experience, one of the participants exclaimed that he now realised that he was a social entrepreneur. After about two years of developing social enterprises in their communities, the participants suddenly understood what the concept of social entrepreneurship was. Up until that point, they had associated social entrepreneurship with either a form of entrepreneurship or a non-profit or cooperative organisation which was the general idea of the concept of social entrepreneurship.

As was mentioned at the beginning, only two enterprises of the eight actually developed and survived over the three years. This may seem like a very small percentage of the cohort that started up and actually grew. However, the lessons learnt from this research gave me a deeper understanding of the struggle that people from marginalised communities face in terms of developing their enterprises. Firstly, there is the dichotomy between the mainstream first world

business environment and the advantages these entrepreneurs have in terms of their resources (such as access to finance and information) while enterprises in townships and rural areas face huge challenges in terms of resources, access to information, transport and secure family structures amongst others.

The issue of culture did arise since I am from an Indian background while all the participants were African. However, there were no major differences. Possibly the only difficulty I found was late-coming or non-appearance at focus group or informal meetings. When we set up meetings at my home for example, one or two of the participants would arrive almost two to three hours late. Everyone had agreed on meeting at my place because it was more relaxed and comfortable than at the college over the weekend. The late arrival of participants caused a delay on the progress and meant repeating the discussions for the benefit of those who arrived late. Being aware of the timelines for the research, I was initially exasperated with the late-coming but when one of the participants mentioned that they had to take two taxis to get to my place and that in some cases the taxi would not leave the rank until the taxi was full, I felt embarrassed at my insensitivity. From then on we made alternative arrangements. We arranged lifts to fetch everyone who was available.

The many hurdles we faced together actually brought us closer and we still remain friends. We certainly did have differences of opinion and as the group became closer, the participants felt free to express themselves more but we worked through the differences in an honest and democratic way. One of the keenest lessons I learnt was the immense challenge that entrepreneurs from townships and rural areas face with the lack of a proper public transport system. If someone had a meeting in Central Durban, he or she would have to ensure they left very early, or had a contingency plan in place before they left home. This is very different for affluent entrepreneurs who simply drive to meetings. The gap between entrepreneurs in built up business centres and those in townships or rural areas is still very large and I believe this can only be changed by developing and supporting social enterprises within the townships and rural areas through collaboration and collective action.

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5

Chapter

Reducing gender-based violence: action research among Zimbabwean youth

Buhlebenkosi C. Maphosa

Introduction

Gender-based violence (GBV) includes all forms of violence which disproportionately targets women and girls, including dating violence, domestic violence, sexual assault and intimate partner violence. GBV in Zimbabwe has been identified as the topmost social and personal security concern for women (Mushonga 2015). Prevalence is high, with estimates that one in every four women have experienced physical violence in their lifetime (ZIMSTAT 2012). Although Zimbabwe has made advancements in the law and national campaigns to strengthen women's security, women nonetheless face societal discrimination and violence because of their subordinate status within all of society's spheres, with roots in both traditional and current legal, religious and social structures (Thomas et al 2013).

Recent studies and interventions in Zimbabwe indicate that they are reactive in nature. This is so because most focus on secondary - immediate responses after violence has occurred to limit its consequences - and tertiary prevention - longer-term treatment and support for victims of violence to prevent further adverse effects (WHO 2002). Although there is a significant increase in awareness-raising campaigns, the efforts currently being funded and implemented to alleviate GBV either address the violence after the reality or attempt to prevent it using strategies that are not necessarily ideal. Such interventions step in too late, do not reach the majority of the population, and do not address risk factors empirically shown to lead to GBV (Wagner 2010). In Zimbabwe, a majority of the resources are directed to services which are related to health, psychosocial support, legal aid and protection services (Made 2012). Due to the high prevalence of GBV in Zimbabwe and the negative impact this violence has, more GBV prevention interventions are needed. Burman (2005) asserts that challenging the behaviour and the normative roles boys and girls are expected to follow, as well as invalidating myths that surround male violence against women, can foster a climate that no longer tolerates such violence.

The study was designed to contribute to the prevention of youth becoming offenders or victims, who had grown up with beliefs and attitudes empirically proven to be a precedent of GBV. The study was aimed at reducing destructive attitudes such as male entitlement, the desire for dominance and female passivity (Wagner 2010) and reducing the overall risk of women being abused by their partners by helping youth understand the abuse of power and control in their own relationships. The aim was to produce more egalitarian relationships based on equality and respect. In the context of violence prevention, it is evident that violence does not simply encompass negative behaviour but also involves context and attitudes (Badurdeen 2011).

The early stages of one's life are very crucial when it comes to gender-based violence, and in particular its prevention. The adolescence stage, moving to young adulthood, is when young people are becoming acquainted with their physical environment (violent in some settings), sexuality and intimacy. The adolescence/young adult stage embodies a unique nexus between the experience of

youth as victims or observers of domestic violence in their childhood and later in their life as perpetrators of GBV, particularly intimate partner violence (Follette and Alexander 1992; Tontodonato and Crew 1992; Foo and Margolin 1995). Giving attention to early signs of GBV was part of the intervention strategy brought forth by this research. Its success is dependent on addressing GBV before young people become involved in violent behaviour in their intimate relationships. Bryant (2004) and Barter (2009) write that young people may be brought up with the understanding that violent behaviour in relationships is part of normal conflict and is allowed by gender role stereotypes that maintain submission for females and aggression for males. In order to prevent violent behaviours from being normalised, it is of paramount importance that interventions are geared towards young people.

The literature reviewed in this study highlights the need for studies of this nature that will focus on violence prevention before it occurs, targeting the foundations of this epidemic in its early stages of appearance in youth. The study prioritised youth because people under 25 years make up 43% of the world's population, with the percentage reaching 60% in developing countries (UNFPA 2011). These young people are not abstract statistics but are present in schools, youth clubs and organisations. Underpinning this study is the concept of the influence of committed minorities, in this case, youth, in bringing about social change. Social change over time does not necessarily require changing the majority's opinions. The overall aim of the study was firstly to obtain data on youths' attitudes toward gender-based violence and how these attitudes are formed, secondly, to identify how this data could be used to bring about future changes in attitude and experiences.

Gender-based violence and youth: the Zimbabwean context

Methodology

This study was conceived as action research with the aim of investigating young people's attitudes to inform the directions for GBV interventions in Zimbabwe. The study incorporated a component of exploratory research to gain an understanding of young people's perspectives and their system of values, particularly their view of the reasons for violence in certain contexts and their views concerning the acceptability of such violence.

The two secondary schools selected for the study have similarities due to the fact that they fall under Bulawayo metropolitan's area, but one is urban and one is rural. The chosen schools both have relatively low pass rates and both are in large communities with signs of high levels of poverty, unemployment and social exclusion: for the rural school, all these indicators are much more severe. Although the figures on the prevalence of gender-based violence in Bulawayo are not comprehensive, Bulawayo province has the lowest incidence of gender-based violence in the country (Morna and Chingamuka 2013). It can be argued, however, that the available statistics do not truly reflect the magnitude of the problem.

The study made use of mixed methods, both quantitative and qualitative. Although the study was predominately qualitative and action-oriented, the first phase of the study made use of quantitative methods by administering survey questionnaires to young people between the ages of 14-18 years. The questionnaire served the purpose of clarifying ways in which young people conceptualise and frame violence against women in different contexts. The questionnaire was developed after a review of relevant literature. The questionnaire was administered by the researcher and research assistant to a total of 75 students (40 girls and 35 boys) from both schools and was completed in the schools by Form Two to Lower Six students [9th – 12th grade secondary school students]. The questionnaire had a combination of open-ended and closed questions designed to capture young people's attitudes towards violence, forms of violence and tolerance of different forms of violence against women.

In addition to the questionnaires, two focus group discussions (one at each school) were conducted with young people who volunteered to be part of the discussions and contribute their viewpoints. Focus groups were made up of 13 students (six girls and seven boys). The focus group discussions lasted an hour and focused on providing an opportunity to contextualise data from the questionnaires and gather in-depth information.

The action research component of the study engaged young people in the design, implementation and evaluation of a gender-based violence prevention education programme. The rationale for action research is its association with 'hands-on' small scale research projects as propounded by Denscombe (2014). Further, action research is aimed at transforming issues since it proposes that a research's main object should not only centre on gathering and understanding problems but should embark on constructive change. The defining part of action research is its commitment to different stages of research whereby results of the research and evaluation of its outcomes become incorporated into the research cycle. The cycle of research focuses on engaging those affected by the study in the design, implementation and evaluation to promote their participation as associates in the research rather than being research objects. In other words, the participatory nature of action research is its most distinctive feature. According to Zuber-Skerritt (2001, 19) "... action research is emancipating when it aims not only at technical and practical improvement and the participant's better understanding, along with transformation and change within the existing boundaries and conditions, but also at changing the system itself of those conditions which impede desired improvements in the system".

The programme design, implementation and evaluation revolved around these thematic areas: programme content (what was the education intervention going to teach); how was the information going to be delivered/taught; and who was going to deliver/teach. After completing the focus group discussions, volunteers from the discussions were asked to participate and become part of the action group, which was to help design the education workshop. All participants volunteered to be in the action groups and the study had one action group for each school. The action groups both had four sessions to discuss how the workshops would be developed. These sessions lasted about 30 - 60 minutes and were recorded and transcribed. In every session, there was a recap of the issues discussed and agreed upon.

In terms of the content of the gender-based violence prevention education programme, the action group discussions revealed that there was a need for a clear conceptualisation of gender-based violence, identifying different forms of GBV, its causes and effects. In other words, defining gender-based violence was the starting point. Because the action group comprised of the participants in the focus group discussions, their responses were used to design the programme. Their answers highlighted a lack of knowledge and disagreement about issues surrounding gender-based violence with most of their responses influenced by unequal gender norms. With this information, the researcher and research assistant produced content for the programme based on what the participants highlighted as key themes and also based on the themes that came up from the questionnaire and focus group discussions. The rationale for engaging the young participants in discussing possible content for the workshop was that often boys and girls may have different opinions as to which topics are relevant to them depending on their experiences.

With regard to how the content was to be delivered, the young participants suggested the incorporation of drama, song and poetry to convey the workshop messages together with training provided by the researcher and co-facilitator. In the urban school, it was rather challenging because participants were not keen on participating in the delivery of the workshop but were more comfortable with using an approach familiar to them (teacher - student approach). Faced with the challenge of making the content interesting to young participants, the researcher and co-facilitator asked the young participants from the rural school to perform at the urban school a play that they had prepared for their own workshop. However, what was common in both schools was a discussion on how the workshop would be delivered. A focus on fun, practicality and effective participation were common points raised by both action groups.

The final stage discussed in the action group sessions was who would deliver the gender-based violence prevention education workshop. Participants felt comfortable with the researcher and co-facilitator conducting the programme, which freed them to contribute without worrying whether their responses were correct or not. Teachers helped with mobilising the young participants and ensuring cooperation of participants. When the design of the programme was completed, implementation of the workshops was done in both schools: 25 young people from the rural school participated in the programme whereas 18 young people participated from the urban school, making a total of 43 participants. This was a challenging process because of the practical constraints within the individual schools, for example, the action research intervention was conducted at the onset of school examinations.

Evaluation

After the implementation of the workshop, participants were engaged in an evaluation process to determine the immediate outcomes of the project. At the end of the workshops, the participants completed a short questionnaire based on how they felt about the workshop and whether they had learnt anything. In addition to the questionnaires, a small focus group discussion was held with 12 students (five girls and seven boys). The discussion lasted about forty-five minutes and the aim was to find out their feelings about the programme, their opinions on the content and how it was delivered. The evaluation of the programme was based on the basic principles of participatory evaluation:

- *participation*, that is, giving the people affected by the study the opportunity to voice the impacts of the project;
- *negotiation*, between young participants, researcher and research assistant on how and when data gathering was going to be done, and how results would be disseminated and the cause of action;
- *learning*, determining any cumulative knowledge by participants,
- *flexibility*, modifying the evaluation to suit local conditions and the participants.

The participatory approach in the evaluation was used for its “emphasis on collective inquiry, analysis and reflection on findings to create the conditions for shared learning that links forward into action and future planning” (Evaluating Socio Economic Development, Source Book 2 2003). The strength of the participatory approach lies in its ability to “capture the complexity and richness of programme effects through the use of creative, generative tools and techniques rather than standardised techniques of assessment” (Elbakidze, Angelstam, Sandström and Axelsson 2010).

Findings from the survey

This section includes findings from the questionnaire, focus group discussions and the evaluation of the gender-based violence prevention education programme. The questionnaire had questions that addressed the following themes:

- violence,
- masculinity,
- gender roles and relations,
- types of violence and how serious young people regard violence,
- young people’s conceptualisation of gender-based violence and

- awareness of gender-based violence.

From the results, young people's attitudes toward violence are a bit vague and conflicting. More than half of the young people who responded to the survey did not condone violence. Both boys and girls considered violence to be physical. However, in the prevention workshop, it was highlighted that violence also included psychological, emotional, economic and cultural violence. Overall, boys seem to be more pro-violence than girls, for example, the majority of the boys (54%, compared to 13% of the girls) strongly agreed that unless it is in self-defense it is not okay to hit someone. The survey data, along with the focus group data, revealed that social and cultural norms associated with gender perpetuate violent attitudes and behaviour. This was shown, for example, in the question "A man should always be respected by his wife and children", in which 97% boys agreed, and 88% of girls agreed. Tolerance of violence by young people suggests that interventions that address gender-based violence should be administered from a "violence prevention" perspective. With regards to masculinity, the survey revealed that 71% considered it to be natural for men to be aggressive and that men were unable to control their temper as opposed to 20% of the girls who agreed.

Given these findings, when presented to the actions groups, they decided to include in the workshop how masculinity was correlated to violence. Although both boys and girls did not agree that men who fight gain respect, it seemed to be a contradictory response. Masculinity is associated with access to status, power and perceptions of privilege and violence (Seidler 2013), for example, as noted above, nearly all the boys agreed that men should be respected by their wife and children and 88% of the girls concurred with the notion.

Looking at gender role and relations, the boys held the perception that they should be heads of the household, with 60% of the boys strongly agreeing with the statement as opposed to 20% of the girls sharing the same perspective that men should be in charge in relationships. For both boys and girls, there was a consensus that men were traditionally the heads of the families and there was a need to maintain that status quo. The survey also revealed that there is a tolerance of violence among the girls as more than 50% the girls agreed (53%) that women should endure violence for the sake of the relationship or family as opposed to 17% of the boys who agreed/strongly agreed with the statement. This was interesting and can be interpreted as different attitudes or values in relationship. It also indicates a degree of tolerance for violence by girls. It is clear that both boys and girls conform to traditional norms. This is evident in the answer to the question that married women are the property of their husbands: 80% of the boys agreed/strongly agreed with the perception that married women are property of their husbands. For girls, however, 33% agreed/strongly agreed with this statement.

From the responses to the survey, it appears that there are instances of contradictory answers to questions. This was not unexpected in the sense that in general, roles of men and women are unclear, vary between cultures, as to attitudes. The idea of a "dual standard", one for boys, another for girls, is an example of such confusion.

Focus group discussion findings

In this study, I had planned to have single sex group discussions with six participants each, but because of constraints faced by the schools, focus groups were mixed and included boys and girls. There was one focus group discussion in each school. The urban school had twelve participants, six boys and six girls and the rural school had 13 participants, six girls and seven boys. In both schools, the participants knew each other. In total, twenty-five young people participated in the focus group discussions.

The thematic areas in the discussions included young people's understanding of violence, gender-based violence, the causes and effects of gender-based violence and attitudes towards gender-based violence. Young people defined violence differently, perhaps because of different experiences.

Violence was defined by giving particular behaviours as examples of violence. For instance, acts of physical violence (beating, injuring with intent, killing) and acts of sexual violence (rape).

Violence is fighting between two or more people (Girl G1)

Physical fights and arguments in family (Girl G2)

Violence is when parents or relatives abuse their children by beating them up (Boy G1)

Rape is violence (Girl G2)

Violence is bullying (Boy G2)

The majority of the young people acknowledged that violence was wrong, saying it was 'bad' and it was for 'cowards'. However, there were contradictions in their responses, some believed it was necessary in certain circumstances especially in self-defense and protection and in creating a *machismo* persona. Gender-based violence was defined in terms of violence in relationships, families, extended families, between girlfriends and boyfriends and husband and wife. There was an acknowledgement that gender-based violence goes beyond just physical and sexual violence but also includes emotional and psychological violence. The discussion did bring to light that gender-based violence could also be male on male and female on female violence.

Gender-based violence is violence between married couples, especially if women do not do roles assigned to them, men may beat their wives up for not doing all these things (Boy G2)

It is violence between a man and woman, if especially the woman is unemployed and the man feels entitled to treat the woman any how (Girl G1)

The types of gender-based violence mentioned by the young participants were rape/sexual assault, bullying, beatings, incest, insults/verbal abuse. The majority of young people identified the following problems as possible causes of violence: poverty, a lack of education, infidelity, promiscuity, jealousy, disrespect, tradition, alcohol abuse, and mimicking violent behaviour. From the causes, it is clear that young people understood gender-based violence from the perspective of gender norms, values and beliefs which create and reinforce unequal power hierarchies between men and women.

However, there was a sense of pointing fingers and blaming women for violence. The majority of the boys felt that women cause gender-based violence.

Because violence is the only thing you see and know, growing up at home, that behaviour sometimes becomes part of you (Boy G1)

Who can tolerate a wife or girlfriend that cheats they need to be taught a lesson (Boy G2)

Sometimes women provoke violence against themselves they just talk too much and don't know when to stop (Boy G1)

Young people identified effects of gender-based violence to include mental health illness, depression, pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections and HIV, dropping out of school, failing in school, low self-esteem, physical injuries, death, broken homes and lack of trust in relationships. Attitudes towards gender-based violence were mixed, with the majority of the young participants highlighting that violence was wrong but at the same time justifying it, depending on the contexts in which violence occurred. Justifications were made by boys about the issue of rape of women, expressing that women dress in a way that provokes men. In the same vein, an important point of discussion came up whereby female on male violence was acknowledged and criticised.

I mean if you girls wear these things that you are wearing, exposing your body and so on, you are arousing men. When you get raped you start crying (Boy G1)

These days even grown women are doing despicable things and making young boys sleep with them, that is rape (Girl G2)

Overall, a level of awareness of the disturbing impacts of violence in general and gender-based violence in particular was present in the young people. Both findings from the questionnaire and focus group discussions revealed that the gender roles, norms and stereotypes participants held influenced their view on what constitutes violence and their tolerance surrounding violence. The findings of this research bears some similarity with other studies that have focused on young people and gender-based violence (Das et al 2014, Decker et al 2015 and Bell and Stanley 2006).

The Gender-based violence prevention education programme

The programme was designed by the researcher with the input of the young people who comprised the action groups. As noted above, the programme design revolved around these thematic areas:

- programme content (what was the education intervention going to teach),
- how was the information going to be delivered/ taught and
- who was going to deliver/teach.

The researcher and assistant facilitator, together with the young people, contributed to the delivery of the education intervention. The design of the programme was informed by a variety of violence prevention education programmes. These were taken from the Youth for Youth Empowerment Project (2012), Stepping Stones original manual (1995), Gender Matters (2007) and Alternatives to Violence Project's (AVP) manual basic course (revised) (2002). The programme was devised to facilitate young people's comprehension of gender norms, their social construction and how they in turn create gender identities that may perpetuate gender-based violence. By examining these topical issues young participants were able to see themselves with the capacity to reduce and prevent inequality and violence, either at an individual level or collectively.

The gender-based violence education workshop was delivered to young people between the ages of 14-18 years in two schools, one urban, one rural. As noted above, the programme was set up in an effort to reach the youth population through a school based programme that would address gender-based violence issues and prevention. Kinsman, Romer, Fursternberg and Schwarz (1998) assert that school based efforts are very significant because the targeted young people are already participating in dating and sexual activities that provide a setting for gender-based violence (see also CDC 2007; 2009). A holistic approach was used by the programme to address gender-based violence. This involved enriching young people's knowledge and conceptualisation of gender-based violence and its causes, particularly how gender norms and inequality fuel the problem; the creation of an enabling environment for young people to share their experiences and examine how they are affected by violence; providing young people the opportunity to acknowledge that they need to be respected and valued and vice versa; imparting youth with skills and confidence to be transformers in their areas by reducing GBV and encouraging the schools to take up the role of preventing GBV among young people by promoting qualities such as respect and equality in their relationships. The programme was designed in a way that young people would learn through experience and be empowered. Experiential learning, as argued by Kolb (2014), who wrote that the reality of learning is that people learn through experience. The programme made use of a range of exciting and lively, experiential and reciprocal methodologies such as role play/drama, group discussions, buzz groups and brainstorming sessions which allowed for participation and a shared ownership of the programme.

Since two schools were involved, the first education workshop was held at the rural school and was delivered by the researcher and co facilitator / research assistant with experience in youth training alongside young participants who made up the action group, who took up their task by delivering a drama production, composing songs and poetry, all of which had messages of gender-based violence and how it affected them as young people. A subsequent workshop was delivered at the urban school and was facilitated by the researcher and co facilitator / research assistant and the young participants from the rural school responsible for the drama production, as an effort to create some interaction among young people and peer education. Weisz and Black (2010), Sloane and Zimmer (1993) and Milburn (1995) argue that with peer education people are willing to change their attitude and behaviour if a person in the same circumstances or with the same concerns reaches out to them. All prevention education programmes / workshops were one day workshops and evaluation forms were completed at the end of the workshop. After a week, a focus group discussion was conducted as an evaluation exercise. Approximately 43 young participants between the ages of 14-18 years took part in the prevention education workshops.

Evaluation Findings following the workshop

The evaluation of the workshop was divided into two parts. A questionnaire was administered at the end of the workshop and comprised of two questions. The first question asked how the participants felt about the workshop and responses with emoticons were provided which included: a) excited b) enlightened c) sad d) surprised e) worried f) confused g) angry h) cool i) happy j) bored. The young participants were made aware that they could choose more than one response and explain why they felt that way. The second question asked if they had learnt anything from the workshop. The questionnaire was designed so that participants could respond verbally and responses were written down on the flipcharts by the co-facilitator.

Findings from the evaluation revealed that 42% of the participants reported to have been enlightened by the workshop, 12% were happy, 35% excited, 12% bored, 8% surprised and 2% cool. Those who reported to have been enlightened highlighted they had learnt something from the workshop, those who said excited, said it was because they were able to be part of an interesting exercise and got to present in the workshop and directly take part in it. Those who reported to be bored said it was because they found the workshop to be too long and the topic uninteresting to them and those who reported to be happy said it was because a workshop had come to their school and they could be part of it. Those who reported that they were surprised said this was because they were made aware of situations they had seen happening but would have never labelled gender-based violence since these situations were normal to them.

In addition to the questionnaire, a focus group discussion was held with 12 participants. The theme of the discussion followed a similar theme to the action process, which focused on programme content, delivery of the workshop and participation. Responses on the content reflected that students were able to comprehend what was being taught and the topics were easy to follow.

The information was simplified and because fun ways made it easy for us to understand, especially discussing in groups then presenting in front of everyone. (Girl A)

Some topics were more interesting than others, for example when we learnt about boys and girls (gender norms), this was interesting. But again it depends with individuals' preferences. (Boy A)

The focus group also highlighted that the way the workshop was delivered was enjoyed by most of the participants. They reported that it was engaging, exciting and thought provoking. The use of games and group discussions and presentations was favoured more than having the facilitator speak for a long time.

It was different from the way we learn in class, where it's either you are right or wrong, there is no time to be silly and play games. (Boy B)

It's funny how one can learn something about themselves through playing games. (Girl B)

Having different people conducting the workshop other than our teacher was fun because we could be ourselves. It was just nice to have different people than the teachers we are used to and see throughout the whole learning year. (Girl C)

With regards to participation in the workshops, students revealed that the environment was enabling for them to participate and the issues were seen as relevant to everyday life which is why they contributed their views freely. The workshop was centred on the participation of young people and they were given the space to lead in discussions and activities.

Taking part in formulating the workshop, then along with my other colleges, coming up with drama and songs, I felt important and part of the intervention. (Boy D)

It was interesting to see other students our age from a different school do the role-play / drama and convey the message of gender-based violence. However I was challenged that maybe perhaps we could have tried to come up with our own, it was a real challenge they left us. (Girl D)

The overall response that came from the students was that having such workshops was fun, yet at the same time informative. They went on to highlight that it would be beneficial if such interventions were part of the school curriculum because they spoke about issues they faced in their lives. When asked if they would recommend the workshop to other students in their schools they all agreed.

Reflection on action research

In this section, I reflect on the methodology of action research used in the study to develop a subsequent intervention. From the onset, the research was based on a proactive approach in the sense that there was going to be a training intervention to educate and empower young people on gender-based violence issues. The young participants needed to be engaged in the fight against gender-based violence and action research methodology made this possible because it helped to cultivate their participation in coming up with solutions for issues that affect them. This research was used to create an intervention that allowed young people to plan, reflect and act. Unlike in 'traditional' research, in which the researcher is the main protagonist and comes up with the findings, in this action research young people were involved all the way. As I dealt with issues and problems facing them, I kept them involved, informed and interested, for example I shared the findings from the questionnaire with them.

In the course of the study, a culture of research developed among the action group, in the sense that they were learning, exploring and sharing ideas on how the intervention would address gender-based violence issues. As the study progressed the young people realised that they were part of the research process and that their ideas influenced the direction of the intervention. However, the young people viewed me as the principal researcher whereas they saw themselves as active participants. Because the study operated within a cycle of action research, I had to create a system of feedback at every stage of the study, to attain a reciprocal relationship between the young people and myself. Within the action groups, I constantly reiterated the importance of their participation and their position as "transformers" or change agents on the issue of gender-based violence. My presence in the action group sessions prompted the young people to reflect on their ideas for the intervention and toward constructive group dynamics.

Action research, with its distinct epistemology, is a methodology that cultivates a culture of learning and coming up with solutions and hence is appropriate for research that involves young people. However, the use of action research does have its challenges as well, for example, working with time constraints and coping with the workload that comes with it, that is, merging action research (its theoretical and philosophical assumptions) with its actual practice.

Conclusion

Gender-based violence is a pervasive problem which, in general, affects women and girls more than men. A lot of campaigns have been done in Zimbabwe raising awareness about gender-based violence. However, without interventions targeting the young population specifically, they may see it as a problem that affects the adult population only. Although there is limited research on young people and gender-based violence in Zimbabwe, initiatives from other countries have revealed that positive change is possible if there is an engagement of young people in coming up with solutions to reduce gender-based violence.

This can best be achieved through action research with youth. Cammarota and Fine (2010:35) argue that “through participatory action research, youth learn to study problems and find solutions to them. More importantly they study problems and drive solutions to obstacles preventing their wellbeing and progress”. In other words, action research with young people can be an integral, crucial strategy for the development of young people, pro-youth policy making and education surrounding the issue of violence, particularly gender-based violence.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the schools that participated, along with the teachers that assisted the progress.

6

Chapter

Building capacity for conflict-sensitive reportage of elections in Nigeria: an action research study

Joseph Olusegun Adebayo

Background to the study

Elections provide people with the opportunity to exercise their right to choose a political leader; this choice could either be to install a candidate they deem worthy for a political position or remove an existing office holder they reckon to be undeserving (or both). It is (or should be) a participatory and representative process in which all citizens of a given country can vote and be voted for in a free and fair process. Olanrinmoye (2008: 67) is of the opinion that individual members of society participate in the electoral process by deliberately and consciously taking part in activities that have an impact on their society. He describes political representation as the process whereby individuals in the society put themselves forward to be chosen to act on behalf of the community. He further asserts that elections offer citizens a platform to fully participate and be represented in the process of public decision making. Similarly, Lawal and Olukayode (2012: 451) assert that elections confer legitimacy on leaders and make the leaders acceptable to the people.

Sadly however, in some parts of the developing world, with particular reference to Nigeria, elections have always been contentious. Rather than unite the country and its people they, more often than not, are divisive. This is because the ruling party and opposition parties are always at loggerheads either to retain or capture power at all cost without consideration for the people they claim to want to govern. Luqman (2009: 59) claims that since independence Nigeria's efforts at democratisation have been fraught with a lot of anomalies such as unchecked electoral malpractice, violence, corruption and a total disregard for the constitution. It is therefore of little surprise that past efforts at democratisation have collapsed at the altar of corrupt elections and electoral processes.

One of the major challenges plaguing elections in Nigeria is the flawed electoral process. As observed by Luqman (2009) that votes are cast on Election Day does not necessarily mean that the process is democratic. A democratic election is an aggregate of all activities ranging from a credible and updated voters' register, a well-equipped and professional party system built on a sound ideology, a transparent nomination of candidates during parties' primaries, campaigns and solicitation of votes that are devoid of violence, the actual casting of votes, provision of adequate voting materials, quick counting and announcement of results and importantly post-election activities that are devoid of resentment and violence.

It might be argued that successful elections are those in which most of the activities listed above are strictly adhered to and observed. It is also important to state that there are no perfect elections or

electoral processes and there are possibilities that one or two of the aforementioned activities will not be adhered to. This is in line with the views held by Elklit and Reynolds (2005: 148) who declare that errors due to human factors are inevitable in electoral processes. They however maintain that when these errors do not accumulate to affect the outcome of the election in any way, then the electoral process can be said to be credible.

The success or failure of an electoral process is dependent on a lot of factors, some of which have been mentioned earlier. However, one key player in the political landscape of a society is the media. The media is a powerful tool of mass mobilisation. It is a two-edged sword, capable of motivating for peace or instigating violence. As Akinfeleye (2003) points out, the relevance of the media in any polity is generally drawn from the fact that information is necessary for effective governance and administration, and that society depends profoundly on the press for vital information. This dependence by the public on the media places an immense responsibility on the media, perhaps even in magnitudes beyond the comprehension of media practitioners.

The growing wave of media instigated violence, and the need to channel the immense influence wielded by the media to promote societal peace and harmony, has given rise to the emergence of the concept of peace journalism, developed by one of the fathers of peace and conflict studies, Johan Galtung, in the early 1960s. This concept has in recent years been fostered by Jake Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick. Lynch and McGoldrick (2005: 5) are of the opinion that when journalists deliberately make choices regarding which stories to report on and the prominence they accord such stories in ways that create opportunities for members of the society to take the route of nonviolence when responding to conflict, then they are said to be practicing peace journalism. According to them, the concepts of balance, fairness and accuracy is updated by Peace Journalism through the use of the insight of conflict analysis and transformation.

Statement of the problem

Nigeria's media has the potential to be divided along ethnic and religious lines. Given that most Nigerians view political aspirants in terms of their ethnic and religious background rather than their political ideology, and since most Nigerians rely on the media for information, there is often the tendency to fall prey to biased and insensitive reportage capable of inciting violence. This means that the majority of the populace are frequently vulnerable to prejudiced information which is often subtly presented as news, features, commentaries, documentaries etc. This problem forms the major motivation behind this research which aimed to build, through training, the capacity of the media to report elections in a conflict sensitive manner.

Study objectives

Desirous of implementing an intervention that will mitigate the problem stated above, the following objectives were put forward for the study:

- i. Determine the media's current mode of operation as regards election reportage in Nigeria.
- ii. Examine the extent to which media may be responsible for electoral related violence in Nigeria.
- iii. Determine the training needs of media personnel particularly as regards conflict-sensitive reportage.
- iv. Implement training to enhance the media's capacity to operate in a way that discourages violence.
- v. Carry out a preliminary evaluation of the outcome of the training.

The need for conflict-sensitive reportage training

Responsible media is characterised by reportage that is unbiased and devoid of unnecessary propaganda that attracts public attention with the sole objective of making money. The current state of reportage in Nigeria is manifest in reportage mainly motivated by factors such as ownership, geopolitical location and religious/ethnic inclination. Thus, given Nigeria's peculiar socio-cultural milieu which is conflict prone, it becomes pertinent that journalists are taught ways of reporting social issues in a conflict-sensitive and responsible manner. According to Lynch and McGoldrick (2005), few journalists have been trained in the area of conflict analysis and theory. Thus, they are not well equipped to report issues that have consequences on societal peace. Training of journalists in conflict sensitive reportage is imperative because journalists covering conflict are inescapably involved in the events and processes they are reporting on, whether they like it or not.

Conflict-sensitive reportage training of journalists is extremely crucial particularly in a volatile nation like Nigeria. Lynch and McGoldrick (2005: 16) are of the opinion that an informed understanding of conflict leads us to expect that statements put out by parties to a conflict will also be part of that conflict. Without this expectation, journalists may become stuck in what they term, 'the reality based community', oblivious of the way realities are being created around them, and indeed their part in creating them.

Peace journalism training is beneficial to journalists because it equips journalists with the skills to deliberately find ideas for nonviolent responses and to bring them to the public knowledge. Lynch and McGoldrick (2005: 18) are of the opinion that there is never, in any conflict, any shortage of non-violent responses and it is the duty of the journalist to focus on them. In the words of the distinguished peace researcher John Paul Lederach:

I have not experienced any situation of conflict, no matter how protracted or severe, from Central America to the Philippines to the Horn of Africa, where there have not been people who had a vision for peace, emerging often from their own experience of pain. Far too often, however, these same people are overlooked and disempowered either because they do not represent "official" power, whether on the side of government or the various militias, or because they are written off as biased and too personally affected by the conflict. (Quoted in Lynch and McGoldrick, 2005: 18)

This research was equally motivated by the 'successful' outcome of the 2013 general elections in Kenya where the media played a key role in preventing violence. The International Crisis Group (2013) argues that the Kenyan media were not prepared for the post-election violence that rocked the country shortly after the 2007-2008 elections. The media then communicated in ways that suggested partisanship. Even worse was the fact that most vernacular radio stations were unwittingly used by politicians as tool for disseminating hate speech that polarised the nation. However, the media played a more responsible role in the 2013 general elections by reporting the election in a way that promoted peace amongst Kenyans.

The Action Research Approach

Seeking, as it does, to evaluate the potential of training journalists on conflict-sensitive reportage as a way of fostering nonviolent elections in Nigeria, this study is oriented within an action research paradigm. Action research is a research type that is focused on communities; it was first applied to improve conditions and practices in the healthcare industry, and is now commonly used in the social sciences and in particular, peace research. (Lingard et al. 2008; Whitelaw et al. 2003).

According to Parkin (2009) the purpose of undertaking action research is to bring about change in specific contexts. In their systematic review of action research, Waterman et al. (2001: 4) provide a comprehensive and practically useful definition:

Action research is a period of inquiry, which describes, interprets and explains social situations while executing a change of intervention aimed at improvement and involvement. It is problem-focused, context specific and future-orientated. Action research is a group activity with an explicit value basis and is founded on a partnership between action researchers and participants, all of whom are involved in the change process. The participatory process is educative and empowering, involving a dynamic approach in which problem-identification, planning, action and evaluation are interlinked. Knowledge may be advanced through reflection and research, and qualitative and quantitative research methods may be employed to collect data. Different types of knowledge may be produced by action research, including practical and propositional. Theory may be generated and refined and its general application explored through cycles of the action research process.

A mixed research method was adopted for the study. This research method is appropriate because, as stated by Mouton and Marais (1990: 160-170), a single approach is limited in investigating phenomena in social science that are tightly enmeshed. Thus, by combining qualitative and quantitative research, there is greater possibility of understanding human nature and reality.



A cross-section of participants at the training

Stages of the intervention

Action research normally cycles through the following phases: identifying a problem that needs intervention; collecting, organising, analysing, and interpreting data; and taking action based on this information (Sax and Fisher, 2001: 72). The figure below shows diagrammatically the stages involved in action research. It is a way of analysing a social system and generating knowledge about it with the aim of changing it. This attempt at changing social systems can be achieved by following a set process. The different stages of this process were systematically followed in the study and are discussed below:

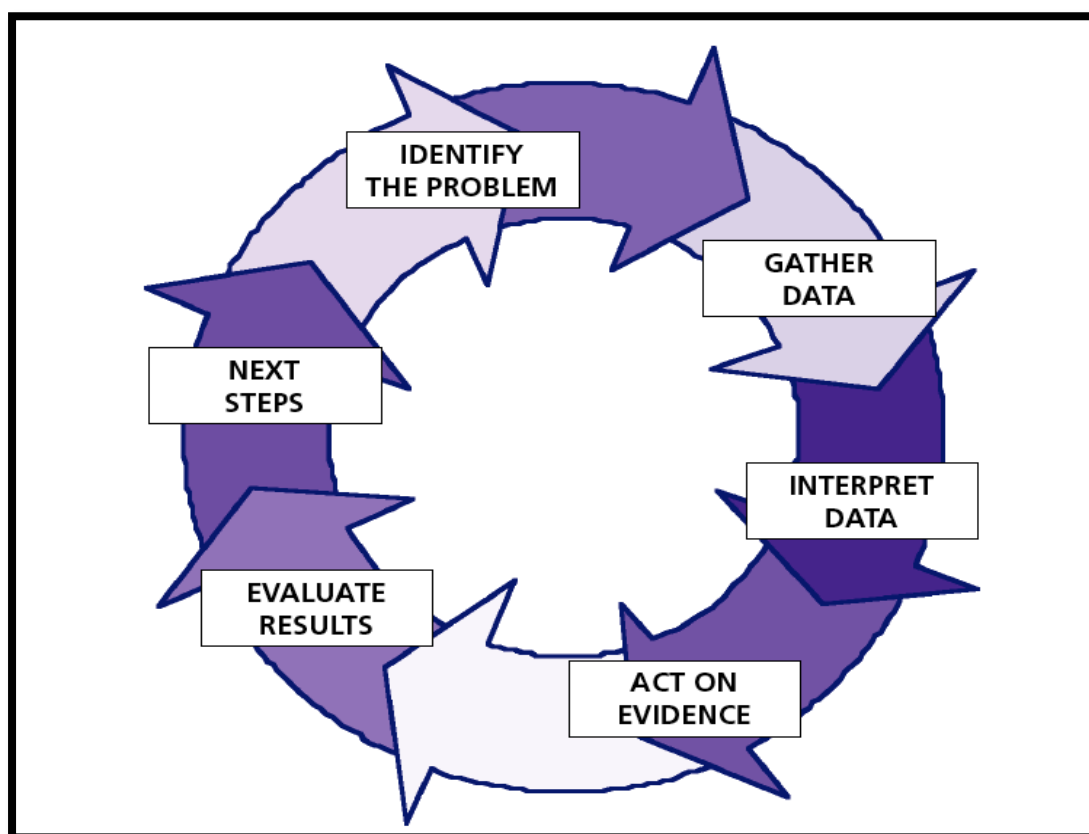


Figure 1: The action research process

Source: (www.sitesupport.org)

Problem identification

The success of any action research is dependent on deciding from the start the main problem the research hopes to provide an intervention for. Johnson (2011) states that the first step in any research study is deciding exactly what to study. Given that the main aim of action research is to effect change in a given situation, it becomes important to first identify the situation that requires change. Johnson (2002: 21) is of the opinion that problems cannot be solved unless they are first identified and defined. Recognising the problem occurs when a situation is observed and there is an acknowledgment that things could be done better. It also involves seeking to understand the nature of the situation and discovering the possible causal factors. Effectively identifying the problem helps in the formulation of the research questions for the study. For example, why do journalists report the way they do? What factors influence journalists' styles of reportage? Does journalistic reportage affect the outcome of elections? Etc.

One of the ways this research sought to identify the problem was by finding out the current mode of reportage by journalists in Nigeria. This was a major objective of the study. To achieve the aim, pre-training questionnaires were administered to the participating journalists.

From the findings obtained through the pre-training questionnaire, it was discovered that the dominant writing style of the participating journalists was traditional (war) journalism which often subtly instigates violence. The journalists averred that they would report any news story as long as the sources were 'verifiable' which clearly showed a lack of conflict-sensitive reportage knowledge. McGoldrick (2006) believes reporting issues simply because they are 'verifiable' could be risky for societal peace because politicians and government sources often skew stories in their favour and unwary traditional journalists often do not take the time to delve into the 'why' of issues. The problem with this lack of focus on the why of conflicts is that without some exploration of the

underlying causes of conflicts, they can appear, by default, as the only sensible response to disagreements.

Findings from the study also showed that journalists often hinge their practice of traditional (war) journalism on the need to be 'objective'. The most used word all through the training was objectivity; journalists regard it as the most important tenet in the journalism profession. According to McGoldrick (2006), the traditional news brand of objectivity inadvertently makes the media the battlefield for opposing politicians who struggle to make their points clear in a tug-of-war style, thereby further heating the polity rather than ameliorating the situation. Thus, it was clear from the pre-training questionnaires that journalists were in dire need of conflict-sensitive journalism training.

Data gathering

After clearly identifying the problem, the next stage for the research was the collection of data that aided the design of an appropriate intervention. Information gathering in the case of this research involved simply interacting with journalists, media owners and/or politicians in the research area with the aim of gauging their perceptions of the proposed research problem.

In order to get relevant data that would help attain the research goal, decisions had to be made about the appropriate data collection instruments and techniques that would be used in the study. Fraenkel and Wallen (2003: 41) suggest three main categories of data collection techniques. Though their suggestions were directly meant for action research in an educational setting, they have profound applicability in peace research and were applied in this study.

First, they suggest a process of observation of participants involved in the study. In the case of an educational setting, they state that these participants might include students, other teachers, parents, and administrators. In order to describe what is being seen and heard, they suggested researchers use field notes or journals to record their observations. In the case of this study, the researcher had to observe the participating journalists by spending some time with them at their various newsrooms. By observing their news reportage style, the researcher was able to understand some of the remote factors influencing their style of news dissemination.

Secondly, they suggest the use of interviews to collect relevant data for the study. The researcher interviewed management and staff of the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) and facilitated focus group discussions during the training.

The interactions emanating from the various focus groups were analysed using elements of conversation analysis (Silverman 2006; Putchta e al. 2004). Putchta et al. (2004) describe conversational analysis as the study of talk in interaction and examines conversation as action taking place between actors. The goal of analysing focus groups using conversation analysis is to understand how society produces orderly social interactions through laid down methods and processes (Silverman 2006).



Some participants involved in Focused Group Discussion

Thirdly, Fraenkel and Wallen (2003: 41) recommend the analysis of existing records as another way of gathering data for action research. They believe it is convenient considering that it is often the least time consuming, since the data has already been collected. The responsibility of the researcher is to make some sense of what is already there. A few examples of this type of data include attendance records, minutes of meetings, newspaper features, policy manuals, editorials etc.

Given that people generally get excited after training sessions and often make positive affirmations regarding positive change in behaviour (in this case reportage), it becomes important to conduct a content analysis of the participants' reportage after the training in order to determine whether or not they actually implemented what they learned in the training in their day to day reportage. As stated earlier, the analysis of data was done in two parts – analysis of the pre- and post training questionnaires, as well as analysis of media produced by the participating journalists. The stories were to be analysed to see how many applied the 17-point plan for practical peace journalism put forward by Lynch and McGoldrick (2007).

Data interpretation

Once the data has been obtained, the next important step is to analyse the data in order to arrive at a reasonable conclusion that will guide the direction of the research. According to Sagor (2000: 6) a number of relatively user-friendly procedures can help a practitioner identify the trends and patterns in action research data. During the process of analysing data, the researcher will be able to identify the major 'story' told by the data and why the story played out in that particular way. Analysing data can help the action researcher acquire improved understanding of the occurrence under investigation and as a result can help in formulating the necessary interventions.

Utilising the findings of the analysis of the data obtained from the pre-training questionnaire and content analysis, the researcher designed a training manual on conflict-sensitive reportage of elections which was used to train participating journalists.

The intervention

The aim of action research is primarily to take action or intervene when a problem has been identified and sufficient relevant data have been obtained. Lim (2007: 10) states that before action is taken, the researcher determines whether or not the data collected answers the research questions. Similarly, Creswell (2005) states that in order to preserve the cyclical nature of action research, it is important to effectively monitor, evaluate and revise the process during the implementation process of the action plan.

The training

The main objective of the training was to equip journalists with the basic conflict-sensitive journalism skills that will empower them to cover election processes in a fair, balanced and non-partisan way. This would then encourage a culture of nonviolence and enable citizens to become well-informed, interested and active participants in the country's political decision making processes. To aid the facilitation of the training process, a manual was designed by the researcher. The manual was made up of three modules. The first module focused on helping participants understand the concept of conflict, its causes and effects and how they can manage or avoid it through their reportage. The expected outcome for the module included:

- A clear understanding of the term conflict, the causes of conflicts and conflict management techniques.
- The relationship between journalists' reportage and societal peace or conflict.
- The expected qualities of a journalist with respect to impartiality, accuracy and responsibility.

The second module focused on introducing participants to the peace journalism model. The expected outcome from the module included:

- A clear understanding of the term peace journalism.
- An understanding of the differences between traditional (war) journalism and peace journalism.
- A detailed exploration of Lynch and McGoldrick's 17 point plan for peace journalism.

Module three focused on training journalists in the process of election reportage. The expected outcomes included:

- Helping journalists clearly identify the important issues that need their attention during the electoral process and the professional way of covering it.
- Equipping them with the skills to be fair, impartial and objective in their reportage.
- Building their capacity to sensitise the public on the need to be peaceful and nonviolent throughout the electoral process.

For each of the modules, participants were broken into five groups consisting of 8 journalists in each group. The manual contained icebreakers that required journalists to deliberate in groups after which their responses were captured on a flip chart.

The researcher, along with the co-facilitators, trained journalists on the dynamics of conflict. Drawing from Lynch and Galtung (2010: 4) it was explained that when people, groups and even countries are in conflict, often due to the incompatibility of goals, there is a clear and present danger

of violence. Journalists were then trained to use conflict situations as stepping stones to transform the conflict in ways that create opportunities for peace in society.

Evaluation

When interventions are carried out in action research, it is always very important to determine whether or not the interventions had any meaningful impact. Lienert (2002: 16) states that project evaluation is an important element of the action research process, since it is an opportunity to 'stand back' and reflect on the intervention that has been carried out and write down observations that will aid the process of strategising. Townsend (2013: 109) remarks that evaluation is consistent with the cyclical representations of action research. Each cycle is required to conclude with phases of monitoring and reflection that seek to ask the following questions:

- What effects have my actions had?
- How does this relate to what I wanted to achieve?

Sincere answers to the above questions will help the researcher understand his / her results from the intervention. According to Townsend (2013: 111) evaluation is concerned with trying to untangle what has been learnt from the process of intervention and to judge whether it is adequate for the desired change process. It also raises questions about what should come next, this could mean further investigation of the context or nature of the practice or making changes to its design.

Outcome evaluation

In order to ascertain the impact the training had on participants, the researcher distributed a post-training questionnaire. The outcome of the training was also determined through a content analysis of the journalists' reportage after the training. The post-training questionnaire was administered a month after the first training. This was to allow the researcher enough time to observe the journalists at their work and also to provide sufficient time for the journalists to implement ideas that were presented during the training sessions. The questions and responses are discussed below:

Question 1: In what ways will your practice change as a result of the training?

As earlier stated, the major aim of the study is to help journalists report social issues better by being more conflict-sensitive in their reportage. Even though the researcher planned to undertake a content analysis of the participants' reportage after the training, he still sought to find out from the journalists the specific ways in which they thought their reportage would change as a result of the training.

The responses obtained were as varied as the participants; however, some points were common to all respondents. For instance, all forty journalists affirmed that they would shun ethnic and religious bias in their reportage. They said they would put the peace of the nation first ahead of ethnic and religious affiliations. This response is heart-warming when one considers that a large percentage of conflicts in Nigeria have their roots in ethnicity and religion. As Nwozor (2014: 137) observes, the polarised nature of Nigeria's society is further heightened and energised by the tainted and skewed lens of ethnicity and religion as portrayed by media owners and practitioners.

Question 2: In what specific way(s) do you think your reportage will foster peaceful elections?

Most of the respondents stated that they would apply Lynch and McGoldrick's 17-point plan for practical peace journalism in their reportage. About 6 points stood out from all the points raised by the participants, some of which are:

- Most of the journalists stated that they would avoid the conflict-inducing attitude of portraying a conflict situation as a 'battle' between only two parties whose sole aim is to win over the same goals. In this case, the two parties would be politicians or political parties seeking to attain the single goal of a political position. Journalists stated that they would focus more on issues and how these issues affect the generality of the population.
- The participating journalists also said they would apply Lynch and McGoldrick's suggestion that journalists should endeavour to ask questions that may reveal areas of commonalities between conflicting parties instead of focusing on that which divides. According to Lynch and McGoldrick (2007: 29), this helps the parties to realize that they actually have goals that are both compatible and shared.
- Journalists also said they would desist from reporting violent acts and describing horrific scenes. They said they would change their approach by showing people's delay struggles with frustration and depravity.
- Interestingly, journalists stated that they would make adjustments in their choice of language and tones. They said they would avoid words such as 'devastated', 'defenceless', 'pathetic', 'tragedy' etc. Instead, they stated they would apply the skills garnered through the training. Journalists stated that they would instead report on what has been done and could be done by the people.
- Journalists also said they would avoid using demonising labels like 'terrorists', 'extremist', 'fanatic', 'fundamentalists' etc. Instead, they stated that they would henceforth call people by the names they give themselves. Lynch and McGoldrick (2007: 30) advised that precision should be applied when describing subjects or objects in a story, e.g. 'bombers', 'suicide hijackers' etc. According to them, these words are less partisan and give more information.

Challenges, unexpected outcomes and limitations

There are uncertainties during research which are almost inevitable. Participants may back out from the research, key interviewees may not show up, government policies and regulations may change thereby hampering the research process, themes may emerge during discussions or training that may sway the direction of the research etc.

My original research plan was to conduct another set of trainings a few weeks before the 2015 general elections in Nigeria to serve as a refresher course for the participating journalists. However, I had to cancel the training because of my inability to obtain an extension for my student's visa on time. The unexpected situation meant I had to communicate with the participants online and I also had to track their by-lines on line. This was very difficult considering that most newspaper outfits in Nigeria do not have active archives.

One other major unexpected twist was the shift in the discussions from being primarily about elections, to other social concerns. During the training period, journalists wanted to know how peace journalism can be applied to stem the scourge of terrorism which was at its peak in North-central Nigeria at that time. The timeliness of the issue meant that the training was adjusted a bit to accommodate ideas and techniques of conflict-sensitive reportage that would aid in ending terrorism as perpetrated by Boko Haram.

Project Outcome

Throughout the course of the training implementation and analysis of data, several themes emerged. Firstly, journalists were unanimous in their position that they indeed have the 'power' to nurture a culture of peace in the society. However, they also asserted that they often act as muffled

drums because of the overbearing influence of media owners and draconian government policies. Thus, in order not to offend media owners and also in a bid to avoid government clampdown, journalists have fallen prey to a practice of journalism that is devoid of conflict sensitivity. One of the goals of the training was to hand 'power' back to the journalists; the power to influence society positively by setting a positive developmental agenda for public discourse.

Secondly, Journalists were of the opinion that the poor remuneration, which is a common problem among Nigerian journalists, makes them easy prey for politicians courting favourable coverage and makes it difficult for them to be objective and nonpartisan in their reportage.

Thirdly, adequate training and re-training of journalists has a greatly positive impact on their reportage style, particularly their conflict-sensitive reportage of socio-cultural and socio-political issues. It was observed through content analysis of the journalists' reportage after the training that the journalists applied the tips they got from the training to their journalistic practice and determinedly sought ways through which they could advocate for peace through their reportage. It was also clear that journalists applied their gate-keeping skills in giving newsworthiness to stories that engendered peace, thereby setting an agenda for peace as a public discourse.

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PART II:

HEALING AND RECONCILIATION

7

Chapter

Moving towards reconciliation: Ndebele and Shona relations in Zimbabwe

Cyprian Muchemwa

There are some things that only governments can do, such as negotiating binding agreements. But there are some things that only citizens outside government can do, such as changing relationships (Saunders 2005: 1)

This chapter is based on an Action Research (AR) approach which was implemented using Johan Galtung's Transcend method (2004). It narrates my personal experience of using Action Research in an effort towards building peace. The chapter also explores the relevance of AR in transcending existing ethno-political polarisations between Ndebele and Shona ethnic groups in Zimbabwe. This is accomplished by nurturing peace through collaboration in order to promote mutual respect, understanding and friendships. Using a sample of twenty four young Ndebele and Shona speaking participants over an interactive period of nine months, the chapter will demonstrate that AR is capable of creating a transformational platform which can build peace.

Action Research

Action research emerged as an attempt to deal with real life problems and situations that demand practical intervention in the form of transformative action. The concept of Action Research can be traced to the works by John Collier (1890-1947) in the 1930s. However, the more systematic and methodological work on Action Research is linked to Kurt Lewin who first used the term in 1944 and later published a paper titled *Action Research and minority* in 1946. Lewin believed that it was possible to conduct an experiment in a real life situation with the aim of achieving a specific goal that has a bearing on problem-solving and social change (Bloor and Wood 2006: 10).

Action Research bridges the gap between theory and practical problem solving through humanising the research activity. According to Greenwood and Levin 'Action Research is a set of self-conscious, collaborative and democratic strategies for generating knowledge and designing action in which experts in social and other forms research work together with local stakeholders in order to work out a practical solution to a problem' (2007:2) In simple terms Action Research is a set of actions which incorporates collaboration or partnership between the researcher and stakeholders to address a particular problem. To Kemmis, Action Research is 'capable of changing people's practices and the situations in which the people practise – the conditions of their practice – as they change their understandings of their practices' (2010). The essence of Action Research is on doing research 'with' instead of 'for' stakeholders. The participation of various stakeholders from the community at different stages of the research process differentiates Action Research from other conventional research approaches.

The ontological assumptions of Action Research are hinged on the notion that Action researchers view themselves as agents of change, endeavouring to promote values based on the inter-

relationship between the researcher and the environment. This was summed up by McNiff and Whitehead who indicated that 'the central methodological assumptions are that Action Research is done by practitioners who perceive themselves as change agents regardless of their social and institutional contexts' (2006: 35).

The epistemological basis of Action Research is that knowledge production is always a process (McNiff and Whitehead 2006: 35). Therefore, it is not possible to come up with final answers on anything. What this means is that all answers should be considered provisional and they should be subjected to critique.

Key characteristics of Action Research according to Craig (2009:7):

- The study takes place in natural setting,
- The researcher must examine his/her own biases and use professional judgement and background in developing a research as an instrument,
- Findings are typically rich in description,
- Process and not product is stressed and
- Findings inform practice.

Contextualising ethno-political polarity between Ndebele and Shona within action research

Despite all the efforts by government to project an image of a united country, Zimbabwe is ethnically divided. This has made genuine peace and unity very difficult to attain. The polarised ethno-political differences between the Ndebele and the Shona groups are deeply rooted in history. The Shona and Ndebele belong to the Bantu group whose ancestry is traced to West Africa (Vansina 1995). However, the ancestors of the modern Shona speaking people settled in modern Zimbabwe around 500 AD (Beach 1980). While the Ndebele speaking people settled in Zimbabwe in 1839 AD (Cobbing 1976). Since the arrival of the Ndebele, the relationship between the two groups has generally been characterised by antagonism and limited co-operation in some areas.

It seems as if the Shona never really accepted the indigeneity of Ndebele in Zimbabwe and have perceived them as 'foreigners' while regarding themselves as 'more indigenous' whose right to belong is beyond question. This situation created a complex relationship problem whose hallmarks were and still are characterised by mutual suspicion, disrespect and a general distrust of each other. This complex relationship has been continued by different generations and has been passed on through intergenerational transmission of both trauma and antagonism (Stauffer 2009). What may have changed were the actors while the characteristics of the conflict have remained unchanged.

During the pre-colonial period from 1839 to 1890, the antagonism was manifested by limited co-operation as well as intermittent raids and counter raids of each other. During the colonial period from 1890 to 1980 the two ethnic groups became victims of the British Settlers' oppressive rule. However, this situation also induced some levels of co-operation as the two groups struggled against the common enemy, but nonetheless there was serious competition to occupy the little space for Africans which was created by successive colonial governments. This can be evidenced by the events such as the 1929 faction fights in Bulawayo between the Ndebele and Shona urbanites and also the intra-nationalist as well as inter-nationalist political parties' violent clashes in the 1960s and 1970s (Msindo 2006).

Independence, which came on 18 April 1980, failed to bring the much needed unity as far as the ethnic relations were concerned. The predominantly Shona post-colonial state failed in its nation

building endeavour due to a culture of intolerance (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2008). The situation was further exacerbated by the infamous Gukurahundi military campaign (1983-1987) in Ndebele speaking Matabeleland which left an estimated 20 000 Ndebele people dead (CCJP 1997). Brutal violence and atrocities were only halted after the signing of the Unity Accord on 22 December 1987 between the Zimbabwean African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) and Patriotic Front Zimbabwe African People's Union (PF ZAPU). But ever since the disastrous Gukurahundi campaign the two groups have remained stuck on the edge of a potentially combustible environment (Muchemwa, Ngwerume and Hove 2013).

In essence the conflict has been in and out of violent modes over many years, a situation which qualifies it as a protracted social conflict. Efforts to address this with a top down approach which were done under the auspices of the Unity Accord between ZAPU and ZANU did very little in as far as relations were concerned among ordinary Ndebele and Shona citizens (Mashingaidze 2005; see also Murambadoro 2015). Even though the signing of the Unity Accord was a commendable act, it was not sufficient to make significant changes to the polarised relationships and mistrust between the two groups. The emergence of radical secessionist groups from Matabeleland in recent years such as Mthwakazi Liberation Front (MLF), Mthwakazi Republic Party (MRP), Matabeleland Liberation Organisation (MLO) and Ibetsu Likazulu, which are all advocating for a complete secession of Matabeleland from the rest of Zimbabwe, is a clear manifestation of this problem (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009: 149). This also means that ethno-political polarisation and rivalry is most likely going to continue unabated with even greater intensity if no action is taken. This situation motivated me to embark on a small but ambitious attempt using an Action Research approach to bring together a small sample of young Ndebele and Shona who happen to be victims of this relationship problem in an effort to build friendships.

Theoretical issues: Conflict transformation and Transcend method

This study is being guided by Lederach's Conflict Transformation model and specifically the *Moral Imagination* aspect of the Conflict Transformation. Conflict Transformation addresses relationships in general and aims to (re)build trust through fostering forgiveness, healing and reconciliation and crucial to all these activities is the mending of relationships. Relationships constitute an important part in the process of Conflict Transformation where peace is centred and rooted in the quality of relationships. Tension based past relationships can influence present and future relationships through intergenerational transmission of disrespect and distrust of each other. Lederach further advances that the moral imagination aspect of Conflict Transformation is the capacity to imagine something rooted in the challenges of the real world yet capable of giving birth to that which does not exist yet. In his own words: 'Moral imagination requires the capacity to imagine ourselves in a web of relationships that includes our enemies, the ability to sustain a paradoxical curiosity that embraces complexity without reliance on dualistic polarity' (Lederach 2005).

Lederach believes that 'the concept of Conflict Transformation does not suggest that we simply eliminate or control conflict', but rather points descriptively towards its inherent dualistic nature (2004). By this he means that conflict is naturally created by humans who are involved in different relationships, yet once it occurs it changes the very people and their relationships. Thus, the cause and effect relationship goes both ways – from the people and the relationship to the conflict and back to the people and relationships.

Transcend Method

This study applied the Transcend Method as the guide towards implementing the action component of the research. The Transcend Method is a strategy towards Conflict Transformation which was developed by Galtung (2004). It views peace as the ability to handle conflict through empathy, nonviolence and creativity. It brings together conflicting parties with the help of a facilitator. According to Galtung (2009: 18-19), transcendence means that

... actors and goals are maintained exactly as they are, but there has been breakthrough, the incompatibility barrier has been lifted, the system has been transcended. (That is where dialogue comes into context). What was impossible has become possible, not only the region of acceptability, but sometimes even the point of bliss has become attainable. Transcendence is unlike compromise where the compatible is made acceptable and actors remain the same as they were, but the goals change, they modified in the sense of being moderated in this case the original compatibility barrier is entirely respected, it is only the acceptability region that has been expanded.

Galtung further reiterates that the Transcend method using dialogue 'loosens conflicts' and allows parties to unlock the conflict through joint creativity (2009). Emphasis is placed on identifying shared roots and responsibilities, rather than apportioning blame and guilt (2000). The Transcend method relies on dialogue and creativity as opposed to negotiation. Dialogue is unlike negotiation which is competitive whereby one party seeks to prevail over the other; dialogue seeks to engage the opposite sides in a non-confrontational manner in order to develop mutual respect, understanding and collaboration (Isichei and Bolaji 2009). The Transcend method is motivated by the following premises (Galtung 2009):

- Conflict is a source of violence or development,
- Mutual causation and shared responsibility and
- There is intrinsic value in empathetic and respectful dialogue.

Methodology

The study employed a qualitative research methodology because the research was exploring real people's feelings, perceptions and experiences. The inquiry delved into relational issues of polarised groups with the intention of creating a platform for the possible development of friendships. This necessitated the need to qualitatively explore the experiences and narratives of a small sample drawn from Solusi University which is located fifty kilometres outside of Bulawayo, Zimbabwe's second largest city. In qualitative research, numbers are of little significance because the aim is not to quantify the extent of the diversity of the research subjects but rather to explore and describe the diversity of a phenomenon (Kumar 2005).

The research group was made up of female and male university students between the ages of 18 and 25. The research looked at twenty-four participants who were divided into two groups, each group composed of twelve participants drawn equally from the Ndebele and Shona ethnic groups. One group of twelve participants underwent the practical experimental dialogue process where participants came up with creative proposals and discussions that were meant to build mutual understanding and respect and possible friendships. I facilitated the dialogue sessions. The second group of twelve participants was the control group and the group did not participate in the dialogue. The two groups were compared after the intervention. Data was recorded using an audio recorder.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling and their selection was largely based on their understanding of Ndebele and Shona polarisation and their willingness to commit themselves to participate in the research over a period of nine months. The nine months timeframe was largely due to the nature of Action Research. Interventions in Action Research require sustained efforts in order to enhance chances of success, because a once-off intervention or activity may not effectively transform situations. As pointed out by McNiff and Whitehead 'human beings are unpredictable because of different choices which they make' (2006). Thus, given this and also the emotional nature associated with humanity, transformation in general neither takes place automatically nor as quickly as the researcher may want. This is why it is important to factor in time in the application of sustained efforts towards transformation.

Discussion of the process

To people who are not ordinarily friends, the journey to friendship represents transformation. This resonates well with the Transcend method whose central belief is that in order to address conflict there must be a transformation of actors' relationships (Galtung 2009). Conflict parties cannot continue to act and behave in the same way and yet expect a change in the relationship. Thus, the attempt to build friendships represents a creative and ambitious attempt at dealing with conflict between polarised groups. The Transcend method of Conflict Transformation views conflict as a source of potential development or brutal violence – depending on how it is handled. The table below indicates the journey and steps taken toward building friendships. Six dialogue sessions were held in between July 2014 and April 2015 and each session was guided by a specific theme/goal.

Table 1 Steps taken to build friendships

Date	Steps	Participants involved	Purpose
May 2013	Initial contact	2	The initial contact had to be made well ahead of time because I expected the process of obtaining clearance to take some time due to existing protocols. My first contacts with regards to gaining research access were the Pro-Vice Chancellor of Solusi University and the Dean of the Faculty of Arts. It took about three weeks to get a response.
29 June 2014	Initial meeting	29	Potential participants were recruited through a public announcement in a weekly church service and initially 43 participants indicated interests in participating, but eventually 29 attended the initial meeting. This meeting was intended to clarify issues pertaining to the research and to enable the researcher to select the 24 participants for the research.
7 July–14 July 2014	Pre-intervention interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs)	24	The interviews and FGDs were firstly meant to help gain an understanding of the current nature of Shona and Ndebele relations. The second purpose was to have a pre-intervention evaluation of the attitudes of the participants. The third purpose was to make arrangements for the dialogue sessions.
30 July–1 August 2014	1 st dialogue session	12	The first dialogue session was designed for ice-breaking by discussing communication and its role in conflict and in improving understanding of each other.
30–31 August 2014	2 nd dialogue session	12	A perspective sharing session was designed for participants to share personal stories, observations and experiences on ethnicity problems between the Shona and Ndebele.
28–29 September 2014	3 rd dialogue session	11	The third dialogue session tackled the issue of identity and how it is linked to the politics of ethnicity
26–27 October 2014	4 th dialogue session	11	The integration dialogue session promoted and interrogated ways that can facilitate integration and coexistence.

16–17 November 2014	5 th dialogue session	11	The socialisation dialogue session promoted the idea of working together among participants to discuss and finalise a plan of joint activity.
5 December 2014	6 th dialogue session and Action	11	This was the implementation of the tree-planting activity.
31 March 2015–14 April 2015	Post intervention interviews	22	These were individual interviews to analyse the post-intervention attitudes of both the experimental and control groups.

First dialogue session: Ice breaking and communication

The first dialogue session was not easy to kick-start since neither of us knew what to expect. The typical programme structure of the dialogue session was simple and was followed in all the sessions. We started with greetings followed by the opening prayer. I would then lead us into the dialogue discussion theme of the day to kick-start the engagement process. The session ended with a reflection on the key issues discussed during the session and planning for the next dialogue session followed by the closing prayer. There were breaks for refreshments and lunch.

The first dialogue session was crucial as an ice breaker. The main purpose of the first dialogue session was to initiate the whole interactive process and to serve as a pacesetter. The success or the failure of the whole intervention depended on the impact and impression made by the first dialogue session. The session also sought to initiate what could lead to future bonding among the participants. There was no previous or current working relationship between myself and the participants prior to this research.

The theme of communication was of key importance because of the centrality of communication in human relationships in general and also conflict handling in particular. The topic was again also highly relevant in helping to establish trust among participants. Even though some of the participants were acquaintances, they did not know each other well, especially across ethnic lines. One Shona speaking participant had this to say, ‘some of us we know each because we are all students at this institution and because of that we meet at different platforms... and we communicate but that communication is confined to certain issues only like discussing an assignment. But we don’t go beyond the official level of interaction’ (First dialogue session, 30 July 2014).

Other participants also confirmed this and shared their opinions on the dearth of communication in human societies in general. In the introduction, I emphasised the importance of communication in human relationships. As pointed out by Harris ‘each of us sees, hears and experiences the world uniquely; we spend our lives bridging the differences between our perceptions (and the needs and wishes they generate) and the perceptions of others’ (2011).

It also emerged from the session that what inhibits communication are preconceived ideas, including some exaggerations of what some people are made to believe. This usually came through as a result of socialisation. A Shona speaking participant pointed that, ‘As I was preparing to begin my studies here at Solusi, I heard so many stories that the Ndebele people are very hostile to Shona people. But this was not the kind of scenario which I saw when I came here. I am not saying everything is okay - yes there is tension but it’s not as it was portrayed to me’ (First dialogue session, 30 July 2014).

Another Shona participant indicated that, 'the treatment that you get in Matabeleland depends on how you conduct yourself. I noted that communication is very important. Language can bring people together. I have made an effort to learn Ndebele and sometimes when I respond in broken Ndebele at times people make fun of it, but I am happy that my Ndebele skills have improved a lot as compared to the time when I came here' (First dialogue session, 31 July 2014).

All in all, the first dialogue session started in a more promising way than I had anticipated.

Second session: Perspectives sharing

The second dialogue session was on perspectives sharing (see table on the journey to friendship). The second session on perspectives sharing saw participants share their personal life experiences with a special focus on the polarisation between the Shona and Ndebele. Sharing of experiences and perspectives enabled participants to get a better understanding of the diversity that exists and it proved to be an important exercise. Participants demonstrated that young people did not view each other as enemies *per se* but neither did they view each other as friends. A Shona speaking participant pointed out that, 'personally I don't have any problem with Ndebele people. I just view them as any other normal people in Zimbabwe, but the problem is the tension which makes it difficult to get very close. Somehow you just realise that things are not okay and there is very little that you can do about the situation' (Second dialogue session, 30 August 2014).

Even though the participants were acquaintances there was some invisible barrier which was inhibiting the process of reaching out to each other. This made friendship very important in addressing this conflict because, according to Waghid, 'a friendship involves the development of closeness and this enables friends to relax their boundaries and become stimulated by one another' (2010). In the context of the nature of Shona and Ndebele relations, this meant that boundaries were still strong. To relax these boundaries, friendships had to be developed first. The biggest challenge was the socialisation that young people got at family level.

It came out from the participants that each person in the group had a different life experience and background. Within these experiences there are certain key turning points that remain imprinted in one's mind and which may influence one forever. This happens by circumstances and not by choice. From this dialogue session, participants seemed to accept that people came into what they are largely due to socialisation over which they had very little or no choice. A Shona speaking participant said that 'as young people we need a fresh start of course, but we don't know how to go about it' (Second dialogue session, 31 August 2014).

This resonates very well with the belief that while we cannot change our past circumstances, we can at least do something to change our future by presently making appropriate decisions. Participants bemoaned what they saw as the general lack of empathy between the two ethnic groups. They indicated that society is too quick to judge an individual and the judgement is motivated by existing beliefs and other common societal trends. The second dialogue session ended with the affirmation from the participants that people from different backgrounds are products of those backgrounds. Since people have no choice over their backgrounds, it would be unfair to judge them on the basis of their circumstances and not their preferences.

Third session: Identity

The purpose of the third dialogue session was to explore and enable participants to interrogate their perceptions of ethnicity and cultural differences. Sadly, one participant dropped out from the group citing academic pressing commitments and the group remained with eleven participants who all managed to attend the session. We began the session by exploring and briefly sharing with participants the observations that had been made by some scholars on how identity issues and its related politics had created problems found in societies with multi-identities. I even shared an example from Rawlinson that human beings have a universal propensity to form collective identities in order to distinguish outsiders from insiders and this could be done on ethnic, racial, class and

gender lines (2003). The idea of giving this brief talk on identity was neither to give a lecture nor to influence the participants but rather it was a way to kick-start the session.

Participants indicated that the issue of identity was very important in human societies because it gave people some roots but there was a point of contestation on why people fight on the basis of identity. Different reasons like scarcity of resources, unfair distribution of power and resources, and greediness and intolerance were cited as some of the reasons why human beings clash on the basis of identity. The discussion demonstrated the expected lack of consensus by the participants in a situation which has been reflected by academics as well. Under normal circumstances identity – be it across the ethnic, racial, political, or cultural lines – represents mere compartmentalisation of different people. However, identity can be a convenient instrument or rallying point to mobilise people in order to gain certain societal benefits such as power. If we look at the example of ethnically based conflicts we would have to agree with Cordel and Wolff who argue that ‘ethnic conflicts are not about ethnicity per se’ but rather demonstrate some ethno-political conflicts between the concerned ethnic groups (2010: 81). In essence it is the other factors between the other groups which provoke ethnic conflicts. However, I have observed that if the core issues between the ethnic groups are not resolved, conflict becomes more about identities than over differences between the differently identified groups. When one observes the Shona and Ndebele relations in Zimbabwe one may realise that it is not about what happened between the Shona and Ndebele in the past; it is now a problem of the relationship between the Shona and the Ndebele.

One of the most important values of dialogue in general is creating an environment in which one gets an opportunity to listen to the views of others and in return be listened to. For Transcend dialogue in particular the key is to bring parties into an engagement process so that what seemed incompatible is unlocked using creativity. The idea is not to win the other person but to transcend and make what was incompatible very much compatible and that alone constitutes a major step in conflict transformation.

Participants testified that indeed identity creates labels which at times force those linked to that identity to live, or at least pretend to live, in accordance to that identity. At times this may even go against their individual conscience. However, because of ego and the need to gain acceptance by fellow members of society they end up choosing to swim with the currents rather than against them. This was noted as a challenge by the participants who acknowledged that even if they fully appreciate that what happened between the Shona and Ndebele in the past was wrong and that what is happening now is still wrong, they found themselves in between – not like grass between the two elephants fighting but rather like the calves of the two fighting elephants

Fourth session: Promoting integration and blending

In the third dialogue session, participants had ended the dialogue with an affirmation that during the period in between the third dialogue session and the fourth session they were going to brainstorm on what they can do as a group to enhance solidarity and friendship among them. The period in between the third and fourth session had witnessed the sharing of interesting ideas on the *WhatsApp* social media platform. However, what was of concern was that the activity would take place on a small scale. The general feeling and concern had been that the problem of polarisation between the Shona and Ndebele was a national problem and therefore something too big to tackle on such a small scale. Therefore, I noted a feeling of incapacitation on the part of the participants as they felt that their hands were somehow tied. Even though there was an eagerness to do something, the feeling of powerlessness was noticeable.

I also noted that this was one of the challenges of using Action Research: It is possible to arouse the interest of the participants who then get eager to do something about their situation, but may realise that their efforts may not yield much because the problem is too big for them. During the dialogue discussions participants expressed the need to have government involved in the process of addressing the polarisation of relationships. This was a good suggestion because it is indeed the role

of the present government to spearhead processes that are aimed towards improving peace among its citizens. The role of government is always important in any efforts that are aimed towards improving peace at national level. However, in the case of Zimbabwe the government has been part of the problem. During the dialogue I realised that as a facilitator I had to explain and clarify to the participants that while the group was indeed small, whatever little efforts they were going to come up with would nonetheless be important. It had been proven elsewhere that small steps can have an impact not only on those involved in the process but also their environment.

The notion of a shared task was meant to promote both formal and informal engagement and socialising. Among the participants there were some who suggested tree planting. The idea of planting trees for peace is not a new phenomenon in peace activities, in fact it has been done in many parts of the world. It is not about the physical act alone but it is about the symbolism that comes with the act. Trees in many societies symbolise life because they sustain human life on planet earth by providing oxygen and the presence of trees signifies the presence of life. Thus, embarking on tree planting may appear like a simple act but it was a symbolic and meaningful act as well. In as much as it was not a difficult task there were some protocols that had to be followed with the university authorities in order to get the green light. The fourth dialogue session ended with participants settling on tree planting as their joint activity and setting tentative dates for the activity.

Fifth dialogue session: Socialising and planning

We met for the fifth dialogue session on the 17th November 2014 to plan the finer details and activities for the day. Participants decided to do the tree planting on the 5th December 2014. During the action planning participants indicated that they were going to do their best to help maintain those trees as a group. That would help in keeping in touch with each other as well. The number of trees that they agreed to plant was twelve fruit trees representing the initial number of participants in the experimental group.

The sixth and final dialogue session: Planting trees for peace

From the final discussion and planning for the activity to plant trees I had about three weeks to obtain the twelve fruit trees. In those three weeks it was interesting to note that members continued with their chats on tree planting. The idea of planting trees for friendship and peace was not just going to be a day of fun. The exercise was also going to provide a climax to our dialogue sessions. More importantly, it provided participants with an opportunity to connect both formally and informally. The notion of acting together promoted the idea of contact which had been initiated by the dialogue sessions.

During the final dialogue, which preceded the tree-planting ceremony, members were largely giving personal testimonies and reflections on the journey which they were part of from July 2014 to December 2014. The general experience of participants indicated that the journey has been an eye opener and that it was their first time to be part of such a platform and they shared interesting moments both formally and informally. The following are examples of participants' testimonies;

'Guys this was an interesting exercise I think we should continue to meet and even recruit more members, what do you think?'

'I have learnt a number of things not only about the Ndebele and Shona conflict but about life in general.' (Sixth dialogue session, 5 December 2014)

At this stage I should explain that I was more of an observer than a facilitator as I was taking down notes on what the participants were doing and saying. The tree planting was well planned and we ended the session just chatting over lunch. I wondered how the participants were going to reflect on the whole process. Even though the final dialogue session had provided participants with an opportunity to enhance mutual understanding, I was still not sure whether the whole process had made a difference – I had three months to wait to carry out a preliminary evaluation of the

intervention using follow-up interviews with all the participants in the two groups. The reason for waiting three months was to avoid doing it too early which could influence the outcome due to the 'feel good effect' which generally characterises the aftermath of most interventions.

Evaluating the outcome

Evaluating the outcome of an intervention is an essential element in Action Research. More importantly, in peacebuilding efforts, it is crucial to have a reflective practice or culture, which means assessing the outcome of the intervention and deducing lessons from the success or failure of an intervention (Lederach, Neufeldt and Culbertson 2007: 1). Over the recent years peacebuilding interventions have faced some criticism on the basis that there was very little or no evidence to illustrate the effectiveness of such interventions (Lefranc 2013). Peacebuilding evaluation is an evidence based process designed to understand the impact a peacebuilding intervention has (Blum 2011: 2). More importantly, an evaluation in Action Research is not just a post-mortem of an intervention, but rather it is also a continuous audit of an on-going research with the intention to learn to improve the research cycle.

This research showed that the conflict between the Shona and Ndebele exhibited a worrisome intergenerational transmission of animosities which threatens future peace. However, the intervention enabled notable change to be realised and this was signified by the difference between the experimental group and the control group. Such a change could not have come by coincidence, but can be directly attributed to the benefits of dialogue and contact as proven by Gordon Allport some six decades ago.

Participants in the experimental group noted that as young people they had become victims of a polarisation which was not of their own making. Hence there was general feeling that 'we are all victims of the situation'. The dialogue and working together was educative and enabled the participants to develop some level of empathy and understanding of one another. One participant noted that:

I didn't expect much initially, but I think it was an enlightening experience for us young people to discuss and share together. (Post intervention evaluation, 3 April 2015)

Another participant also confirmed that:

We actually need more of these projects because education is key. Some of the mistakes that people make are as result of a lack of knowledge. (Post intervention evaluation, 8 April 2015)

To me these comments represented a slight shift from pessimism to cautious optimism and that is a good start. And such a shift could not have been by coincidence or circumstantial. This also illustrated that intentionally created spaces and platforms can make a difference and perhaps it is not too late to have many more of such platforms.

Challenges and opportunities

- Building peace has never been and will never be about quick fixes.
- Action research can easily arouse the expectations of the participants beyond the expectations of the researcher - always expect the unexpected.
- Sustained effort which is vital in terms of making the intervention relevant requires committed participants.
- There are no guarantees.

Conclusion

Action Research is not about certainties but rather it is all about exploring alternatives or possibilities jointly and creatively (Harris 2004: 2). Applying the Transcend method enabled me to realise that Action Research can create a platform to explore such alternatives. Whatever the outcome was going to be in three months, the platform had been an interesting one and had acted as proof of what is missing between the Ndebele and the Shona. Even though I had no idea of the ultimate outcome I was nonetheless glad that the dialogue had created an exciting platform for interaction. Action Research is 'not about learning why we do certain things, but rather how we can do things better' (Ferrance 2000: 34). This is very crucial in peacebuilding, especially within the African context where it is important not just to do a good diagnosis and prognosis, but there is also the need to find a possible 'cure' and give it to the 'sick patient' to find out if it can make a difference.

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8

Chapter

Healing the wounds of violence: a participatory action research project in Zimbabwe

Dumisani Ngwenya

Introduction

Between 1983 and 1987 an estimated 20 000 people from Matabeleland and parts of the Midlands Province in Zimbabwe were killed by state security agents, mostly from the Central Intelligence Organisation and a specially-trained battalion of the Zimbabwean National Army, during an operation code-named *Gukurahundi* (a Shona word meaning ‘the rain which washes away the dirt’). The main purpose was to deal with those thought to have sympathies with the Zimbabwe People’s Revolutionary Army (ZPRA) and Zimbabwe African People’s Union (ZAPU), its political wing. In practice, this involved violence against Ndebele individuals and communities which has been documented by the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (2007).

Since then, no apology has been forthcoming by the government, if anything, it has continued to cause hurt and pain for the affected communities by suppressing any public debate of *Gukurahundi* or any private healing initiatives.

The question that this research sought to answer was whether, in the absence of an apology or official healing programme, individuals and communities which were affected by *Gukurahundi* could heal themselves?

Research methods

A participatory action research (PAR) approach was used because it provides for both knowledge production and action. In this research, PAR meant that the participants were in charge of the research process, with the first researcher acting as a facilitator. An invitation was extended through the ZPRA Veterans Trust (ZVT) for volunteers to take part in the research, which involved no monetary reward and required long term commitment. The research findings are based on the experiences and attitudes of nine ZPRA ex-combatants and three peace studies students from Solusi University who were acting as interns with ZVT (three females and nine males).

Data collection and analysis

Six dialogue sessions were held between January 2012 and May 2014. These interactive sessions, which included group discussions, argumentation and consensus meetings, were the prime tool for data collection. Dialogue typically plays a central role in PAR because participants are enabled to better understand their own reality by critically analysing their own particular situations and problems. Participants were engaged in informative, reflective and interrogative discussions concerning their experiences and actions during the sessions and were able to devise solutions or

actions. The discussions were held in a mixture of *isiNdebele* and English which were recorded (with the permission of the group) and later transcribed to facilitate data analysis. One limitation of this way of capturing data is the loss of much of the nonverbal aspects of the conversations which usually add a critical dimension to the understanding. Having a transcribed record of the discussions was important because these could be shared with the participants, not only for their records and use but also for verification purposes. In addition, a 'Tree of Life' workshop (a therapeutic three-day workshop (Reeler et al 2009 and Templer 2010)) and a half-day writing workshop were also held, both being actions requested by the group.

As ex-combatants, the participants were politically conscious and generally not afraid to express their views and discuss their experiences. On the whole, the discussions were genuine and frank and frequently very robust (Ngwenya and Harris 2015; Ngwenya 2014).

Although an inductive content analysis was used, an a priori theoretical framework as well as personal interests and preconceptions influenced the approach to the analysis. This carries the risk that the researcher bias might influence the results and conclusions reached. In PAR, one of the ways to guard against this is to ensure that there are 'appropriate communicative structures in place throughout the research and action which allow participants to continue to associate with and identify with the work of the collective project change' (McTaggart 1998: 225). In the final analysis, the extent to which participants identify with and feel that they truly own both the process and the final product is the crucial indicator of validity. The preliminary results of the research were brought to the group for verification and discussion and the final results incorporate a number of comments made at this stage of the research.

Triangulation, through the use of multiple data sources, was also used to improve the validity of the research. Recordings of the dialogue sessions, field notes or my personal reflections, group reflections on actions and interviews were the major sources of data.

The research process

Ideally, PAR requires that participants be involved in all stages of the research, from the identification of the problem to the dissemination of the findings. However, this was only partly the case with this study, due to the way my university leans towards more traditional research paradigms and demands that a proposal be submitted before one's research topic is approved. Moore (2004) has also expressed a similar dilemma.

This meant that this study already had its research questions and general direction defined before prospective participants were contacted. However, efforts were made to discuss this aspect of the research extensively with the participants in order to create buy-in and a sense of ownership from them. A significant amount of time was spent during the first two dialogue sessions discussing these issues and, while I explained what I hoped we could do and how to accomplish this, I was careful not to present the study plan in a dogmatic way that shut out any input from the group. That means the participants had the opportunity to interrogate the plan I presented to them. Fortunately, the overall question was an issue that they were interested in as they had been targets during *Gukurahundi*. In addition, the members participated in determining the specific direction of the research: they had a large say as to who would be part of the group, the pace and rules of the research, the actions to be undertaken and the analysis of the actions carried out. I believe that there was true ownership of the project and that the research was as democratic as could be in the given reality.

Setting up the group

Originally, the ten participants were to be drawn from a community in Tsholotsho one of the areas most affected by the atrocities. However, due to circumstances beyond my control, participants were eventually drawn from members of the ZPRA Veterans Trust based in Bulawayo. I faced two

major obstacles in the process of trying to identify participants for the research. Firstly, I relied heavily on a Grace to Heal (GTH) volunteer staff member based at Tsholotsho centre to identify and invite potential participants on my behalf. The idea was that, once these had been identified, I would then meet with them to explain the whole process and to find out if they would be interested in being part of the research. The volunteer kept informing me that he was making progress but nothing materialised for almost the whole of 2010. By November, I knew that this was going to be a futile exercise, as the period between November and April is the busiest time for rural people. I realised that having to wait till May 2011 would affect my schedule adversely. Secondly, this period also coincided with a time of personal financial difficulty so I was unable to travel to Tsholotsho to organise research participants personally. I then made the decision to work instead with the ZPRA Veterans Trust, whom I had considered as a second group in order to observe the dynamics of the two groups. This move turned out to be fortuitous because in October 2012 GTH encountered a problem with the police in Tsholotsho over its work there and had to suspend operations for a period. This would have also affected the research had I been successful in recruiting participants there.

I approached the chairman of the ZPRA Veterans Trust and explained to him what I was trying to do and my desire to work with his members on this project. He tasked the Secretary General to recruit members who were interested in participating. Unfortunately, due to their internal politics, the start of the research was delayed. Another person took over and started recruiting also; this resulted in a number of people pulling back causing a long delay of six months. This was eventually sorted out and I met on 26 January 2012 with some of the interested participants. This was a brief meeting to explain the whole concept. We then met on 27 January with 10 participants: seven members of the trust, including the vice chairman, and three of their student interns. Initially, I was not very keen on including the students as I felt they could not make a significant contribution to the process and would not be there until the end as they had to go back to university in the middle of the research. However, in the spirit of PAR, I accepted them, albeit grudgingly. As it turned out, their contribution was excellent as they helped me understand how the younger generation is feeling the effects of their parents' trauma.

Altogether, a total of 15 people participated in the research at some point. Of these, two attended the first two meetings and then dropped out, one attended one meeting which was a reflection on the workshop we had held. Two joined us for the workshop and stayed to the end. Four were females and the rest male. One of the females was a student intern, which left two females who participated to the end of the research project, as the other only came to one session. The age range for the ex-combatants was mid-50s to late 60s and the students were all in their 20s. The research was conducted at the GTH offices which are within church premises and which provided a fairly relaxed and safe space for the participants.

I think it is important to point out that I do not consider any of these individual participants to be suffering from any form of PTSD or any pathological disorder as such. I would not classify them as 'victims' but as 'survivors' because, for the past 30 years, they have lived life to the best of their ability and led lives that would generally be considered 'normal' in the circumstances under which they live. However, as their stories revealed, some are definitely hurting and angry, and one or two often spoke about a desire for revenge. Their struggles though, are similar to those of the average person from the communities of Matabeleland.

A number of dialogue sessions were held before we could decide on our first major action, the Tree of Life (TOL) workshop (see Ngwenya 2014). We needed to agree on the modalities of the process and develop a common understanding of PAR and conflict transformation theory. This was a bit challenging because I did not want to portray myself as knowing more than the other participants, so, instead of giving out information on the theories, I used a lot of questions as a way of teasing out the theories and concepts from within the group. I think that, in the end, it worked out well and proved the veracity of PAR's belief in the power of participants to co-generate knowledge

(Greenwood and Levin 1998; Farnworth 2007). This exploratory process was very valuable as it resulted in learning for all of us.

As described above, because of the internal politics of ZVT, the research project almost suffered a still birth before dialogue sessions even began and it needed my intervention to get it back on track. The person who had originally been tasked to mobilise participants did not join the group until the TOL workshop. I could not establish why he did not mobilise participants or why he decided to join the group at this later stage. However, as far as I could tell, the group dynamics did not reflect any tensions at any point during the research period.

Meeting together

The establishment of rapport between the participants and myself was not difficult as I had a working relationship with each of them and because they also had a long history of group cohesion and trust within the group.

Participants did not actively participate during the first meeting, mainly because they were still trying to understand what it was we were trying to do. A greater part of that meeting was also spent in discussions about the logistics of the project. A letter requesting the participation of each person was distributed and the contents explained. Informed consent forms were signed by all participants. We then negotiated about the timing and length of meetings as well as the guiding principles for the process. I then attempted to explain what PAR was and how I thought the process would unfold. As this was my first PAR project, explaining to the group the modalities of PAR was difficult to do as I was doing so from what I had read, rather than from practical experience. I thought my explanation was woefully inadequate, but because the topic was of interest and relevant to them, they were eager to take part. Looking back, maybe this was a good thing as I could genuinely say I was not the source of knowledge and this helped in reducing the power inequalities between us.

I was surprised by how our discussions often mirrored the given theories of healing, although we had not explicitly discussed these. By the second session, the participants were actively interacting with each other and the topic, and even the student interns contributed significantly to the discussions and provided great insight into the world of young people struggling with the reality of the effects of *Gukurahundi* in their generation.

By the third session, people suggested that, in order to come up with a relevant healing mechanism, we needed to find out from the people in our communities what they wanted to see happen in order for them to heal. I did not see the value of this as I felt we all knew already what people would say and besides, for me, the focus at this stage was internally on the group, rather than externally on the community. Nevertheless, participants agreed to carry out an exercise to interview different community members. During their report back at the fourth session, I realised we had not thought through the exercise enough. We could have better prepared for it by deciding more specifically on the questions to be asked. Although some participants had done the exercise, it was done so haphazardly that little benefit was derived from it.

From this point on (23 February 2012), it became difficult for the group to maintain our fortnightly meetings, as they became more and more involved with their own programme, which often took them out of town for long periods of time. Sometimes, only three people from the previous session would be present at the next session; it was often necessary to repeat issues from the previous meeting as a way of helping other participants catch up. Since I was not paying them or contributing in any way to their expenses for attending the meetings, I was really at the mercy of their convenience. (The dilemma of paying or not paying the participants (see Maphosa 2013) never really arose as I simply had no money to do so.) In fact, there were times when we went for months without meeting, as only two or three people would turn up, despite great efforts to invite them in advance and reminding them twice prior to the meeting day. This became worse after the writing workshop as people struggled to keep up with their writing schedule. What participants had been encouraged to do was to work on the framework of their story and then meet to discuss these in a

group before writing out the framework in full. I then resorted to meeting them as individuals to assist with the development of their stories and I was also able to assist with the typing of the final scripts which were handwritten. At the close of this research, four of the participants had completed their stories, although they needed polishing up.

The writing workshop

The life story writing project was one of the actions requested by the group; indeed, throughout our discussions the need to record their stories for posterity and as a way to counter the 'false' history espoused by the ZANU PF government kept coming up. After the TOL workshop and the reflection on the workshop, it was decided to embark on the writing exercise. I approached a renowned Ndebele historian and author, who has written extensively about some of the ZPRA and ZAPU leaders, to teach the group about how to write their stories for publication. He offered us a half-day workshop for which I paid a nominal fee and eight participants attended. He presented us with a simple but effective method which the writers could use as a guide in their story writing, by dividing their lives into four frameworks. Some of the participants found the writing a challenge and gave up along the way. Although I had offered to record their oral stories and transcribe them, no one took up this offer. At least three of them relished the opportunity and did not seem to struggle much with their stories.

The Tree of Life workshop

After failing to make any meaningful contact with Father Lapsley's Healing of Memories Institute, we turned to Tree of Life which was willing, not only to facilitate the workshop for the group, but also to bear the greater cost of the workshop. The TOL workshop took place in May 2012 and was attended by eight participants, two of whom joined us for the first time. The workshop was held over a two-day period at a camping site on the outskirts of Bulawayo.

Basically, 'the Tree of Life is a healing and empowerment workshop that combines the concepts of storytelling, healing of the spirit, reconnecting with the body and re-establishing a sense of self-esteem and community' (Reeler et al 2009: 182). The process does not require clinically-trained counsellors, thus making it viable for use at minimum cost.

A reflection on my learning journey

Doing this research has been a sharp learning curve for me because my Master's degree was coursework based with a minor research component. As a result, my research skills and knowledge were limited and using PAR as my research design made things more complicated.

Reading through PAR examples, I understood the need to engage the participants in a dialogue as a way of interrogating their situations, in order to come up with a better understanding of their problem (Greenwood and Levin 1998; McIntyre 2008; McTaggart 1998). However, the examples I reviewed did not describe the practical steps of doing this particular process. What was particularly missing in most was the transition from reflection to action. By the fifth dialogue session (26 April 2012), we seemed to have lost direction and momentum. There were times when I felt unsure of the path we were taking and thought that at times we were going around in circles. I was not sure how to get the group to the next level, or if we had now gained enough comprehension and appreciation of the issues surrounding our topic (McTaggart 1998: 315).

There were also times when I felt the group and I were working at cross purposes, given that, while my interest in the healing process focused on the group itself, theirs seemed to be focused outwardly to people 'out there'. As I noted in my reflections:

I am a bit concerned that we seem to be focusing mostly outside of ourselves—to ‘others out there’. My hope was for us to explore this question closer to home, maybe we are not yet ready to get personal? Or will this way we seem to be taking lead back home? (23/02/2012)

In my eagerness to achieve my goals for this research, I almost fell into the trap of the western approach to trauma healing I had argued against. However, in deference to PAR principles, I did not seek to force the shift, which eventually happened at the TOL workshop where the group was able to look inward and focus on the healing of the group members.

One of the discouraging things about the research process was the low level of commitment of the participants, especially to the performance of the actions which the group had identified. McIntyre (2004) has also commented on this frustration. The reality of missed deadlines and postponed meetings caused myself a certain amount of consternation. I went into this project with a lot of theoretical knowledge and ideas of how the research would proceed, but the reality was different and often off-putting. Maphosa (2013) has deliberated at length about this in his informative article *Thinking creatively about methodological issues in conflict affected societies: a primer from the field*, which offers great insights into the trials and tribulations researchers face in the field.

In short, going through this research was both overwhelming and frustrating. Overwhelming in the sense that half of the time I was not sure of what I was doing. The literature I read did not spell out in detail the practical steps of doing PAR and I was not always confident I was doing the research correctly and did not know how to lead the process or what to expect next. It was frustrating because it was time consuming (Moore 2004: 158; Dickinson 1997: 34) and I was not able to predict the direction and outcomes of the actions as much as I would have liked to. Transferring the theoretical steps into practice in my research project was my major challenge. However, a visit to the Centre for Conflict and Peace Studies (CCPS) in Cambodia in March 2013 helped me conceptualise this approach better. It gave me a clearer idea of what I needed to do and how to do it.

I struggled with determining how much data was enough and at what point to end the research process, especially since I felt there was still more to be explored before we could confidently claim to have fully examined the topic satisfactorily. In this case, the approaching submission deadline as well as the apparent loss of interest and business of the participants contributed to the decision to end the research. At this point I also felt I had collected enough data (150 pages of transcriptions) and that the two actions completed were enough for the purposes of this research.

My learning through this process was considerable. I learnt about PAR as a research design, how to utilise the dialogue sessions and how, with others, to devise the actions that were carried out.

Evaluating the PAR process

PAR has a number of distinguishing tenets including the following features: the people being studied participate in the research; popular or local knowledge, personal experiences and any other informal ways of knowing are included; there is a focus on emancipation and positive power relations, conscientisation and education; and collective or political action that takes place (McIntyre 2004, 2008; Greenwood and Levin 1998; Guishard 2008; McTaggart 1998; Dickson 2010). This research exhibited these values in varying degrees.

Participation

Weaver and Stark (2006) view levels of participation in PAR as moving from minimum to maximum involvement and from practical to liberating. The purpose of this research was to discover non-clinical self-healing methods that would proffer relief to the participants through the healing of their bad memories resulting from their experiences of *Gukurahundi*. It was therefore important for the group members to have as much control as possible under the circumstances. It was not just the

actions carried out that were meant to bring healing but the whole PAR process. The very nature of PAR challenges the status quo and seeks to equalise power inequities. Despite the inconsistencies in attendance, the participants played an active role in the process, making decisions about the direction of the process, questioning certain things, deciding on the actions to be taken and contributing immensely to the discussions during the dialogue sessions. However, I think that the potential for maximum participation was greatly tempered by my limited experience with PAR and their limited understanding of PAR. In addition, time constraints, competing interests and their lives' responsibilities conspired against their full participation. Nevertheless, to a large extent, I was satisfied with the participation levels. Participants, by and large, produced quality participation and enjoyed the whole experience. Several of them commented at various stages of the research on how much they were benefitting from taking part. Even the life stories writing exercise, which most found taxing to do, was deemed to have been worthwhile by those who finished it.

Indigenous knowledge

PAR values popular knowledge, personal experiences and feelings, as has been posited by Greenwood and Levin (1998: 253): 'Local knowledge, historical consciousness, and everyday experiences of insiders complements the outsider's skills in facilitating learning, technical skills in research procedures, and comparative knowledge of the subject under investigation'. The participants' knowledge was important for me and I believe I genuinely valued the knowledge we generated during the research process. In my attitude and actions I sought to recognise, validate and honour their knowledge. Even in situations where I might have had more knowledge in terms of theories and concepts, I tried to keep in mind Swantz's advice that in PAR

The researcher needs to be open to learn from others and to adopt a genuine learner's attitude even in situations in which apparent ignorance tempts her to become a teacher. The researched and the researcher share their knowledge as equals. The researcher genuinely recognises that she does not know the life world, wisdom or meaning of central symbols of the life of the co-researchers. (2008:38)

It was with this in mind that, whenever we were engaged in such discussions, I adopted Freire's 'problem-posing' approach to education. In this way we were able to generate useful knowledge and there were instances where terms more appropriate to us and our situations were coined. One such term being 'a measure of relief', which was coined during a discussion on trauma healing.

Consciousness-raising

Consciousness-raising allows individuals to view their problems and situations in relation to larger societal forces and throws a different light on them. The consciousness levels of my participants were quite high: they did not just show a firm grasp of self and their contexts, but they had a wide understanding of the macro context too. In fact, owing to their previous and current stations in life, they possessed inside information that allowed them to easily make connections between their personal problems and the broader politics. I found that they possessed a great and present appreciation of how intricate and intertwined with bigger issues their individual problems were. Initially they wanted to tackle the systemic issues related to the causes of their suffering but I felt that this was beyond the scope of this particular research as we neither had the resources nor the time to take it on. Grant et al (2008: 596) counsel that 'in social change work, it is important to achieve "small wins" rather than expecting large-scale change to occur dramatically'. On this need to be realistic about the expected change, I was able to persuade the group to start with actions that would not overwhelm us before we even started.

Political or collective action

According to Babbie & Mouton (2001: 321), action in PAR should induce positive, remedial and corrective social change or transformation. It focuses on problem solving and involves challenging beliefs, attitudes, structures and systems which perpetuate inequities and injustices. The action,

which is undertaken together with the participants, should result in their emancipation. The group undertook two major actions: the TOL workshop which focused on the inner healing for the participants and the writing of the life stories that was aimed at critical recovery of history as a way of challenging the status quo and the suppression of ZAPU and ZPRA's contributions to the liberation struggle, by presenting an alternative historical discourse. The group also carried out an exercise to garner the views of the community on the conditions necessary for healing. The actions performed had to do with knowledge gathering, emancipation through the healing of memories and a challenge to the political system.

To that extent, our research demonstrated adherence to the principles of PAR, albeit in varying degrees. Had the research been longer and well-resourced, I think there could have been an escalation of the magnitude of the actions geared towards challenging the system. The actions undertaken were not actions for their own sake but were relevant and meaningful to the participants and contributed to their wellbeing.

Reflection

Francis (2007) suggests that reflection should happen at two levels: the evaluation of the action and its impact on future action, and the research itself. Babbie and Mouton (2001) view it as a discussion of the action implications of results, the reviewing of experiences and reflection in general on the nature of the research with the participants. This group was able to reflect on the TOL workshop two weeks after the event. The reflection process involved members of the group who had not attended the workshop and it was fascinating to observe the difference in the thinking patterns between the two sub-groups. This was followed 18 months later by an interview with three of the group members to assess the long term impact of the workshop, as well as by a final dialogue session where reflections on the whole research process and my preliminary findings were discussed.

Periodically we had what I will call 'informal' reflections on the process and other similar healing processes that the group members had taken part in prior to the research. That is, people kept making comments during the dialogues about what they thought about the research process. However, in our sixth dialogue, when I tried to ask a direct question about what the group thought about the research process so far, the discussion took an unexpected turn: we ended up having a deep conversation about what it was exactly we were trying to accomplish with the research, which led to a discussion on forgiveness, revenge, tolerance and healing. What I had hoped for in asking the question was to hear how the participants found the process, if it was challenging their thinking capacities, whether they were gaining new insights, etc. In hindsight I think I should have provided questions that allowed the participants to interrogate the various aspects of the process systematically.

Conclusion

Overall, I found that, through a broadly-based array of actions, it is possible for traumatised communities to attain a measure of relief from their emotional and psychological wounds. The actions included creating safe and empathetic spaces for storytelling, both verbal and written, group-based healing workshops, and a critical analysis of participants' contexts in order to understand what exactly needs transformation.

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9

Chapter

Addressing the Healing of Youth Militia in Mashonaland East Province, Zimbabwe

Kudakwashe Chirambwi

Introduction

While this paper is not trying to be antagonistic to the traditionally accepted research practices such as phenomenology, its objective is to show how action research does research in a different way, inadvertently challenging the dominant assumptions underpinning social scientific research in pre and post conflict contexts. However, the action research method is not without its critics. A broad range of literature makes the argument that a researcher may not simultaneously focus on action and research with equal balance (Dickson-Swift et al. 2007 & 2008, Letherby et al. 2012, Flick 2014). This view however downplays the transformative character of action research – to help those we study. This angle, which the scholars seem to miss, is the organising principle that illuminates action research and makes it a stand-alone practice which places high importance on participants as co-investigators, co-producers of knowledge, and co-agents of change.

Action research has its origins in the post-conflict reconstruction efforts of combining theory and practice to solve complex crises (Lewin 1946, Stringer 2013). The method is increasingly thought of as a ‘means of gathering data about a project, and reflecting on this material across different levels of participation in the project’ with the overall aim being ‘to generate knowledge’ and ‘adapt or change the project’ through ‘collaboration and participation’ (McKeie 2002: 268). Incidentally, action research methodology ‘symbolizes much of what modern research is about – analysing the world but also trying to change it’ and ‘whereas some research paradigms may content to add to the store of knowledge, action research asks the question: ‘What can I do about it?’’ (Gray 2014: 328).

The research problem

Sachikonye (2011) and Stauffer (2011) concur that since 2000 the political contest between the two parties *Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU – PF)* and *Movement for Democratic Change (MDC)* gave birth to youth militia recruitment. Both parties made use of youths for political expediency and employed youth to commit atrocities (Solidarity Peace Trust 2003, Merendith 2012, Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013, Atalebe 2014). As observed by Compagnon (2011: 69): ‘the new force (youth militia) was summarily trained by military officers in military discipline, drilling, counterinsurgency and terror tactics’. In some cases, tactics from the liberation war - including re-education camps, propaganda, and all-night *pungwes* (vigils) - were revived. This is one aspect which accounts for why Zimbabwe occupies a high position on The Political Terror Scale (Wood and Gibney 2010, Ausderan 2014).

Youth were brainwashed to regard the MDC, whites and western countries as enemies of Zimbabwe. In the process, they could abduct (Smith 2011), rape (Meldrum 2003) and kill (Boynton 2002, Raath 2002) those perceived to be conscientious objectors (Madondo 2004) as they engaged in coercive political mobilisation. Two terror groups conspicuously emerged namely the *Green Bombers* (BBC 2002, Blair 2002) and *Chipangano* (Mutongwizvo 2014). While the former preyed on rural communities, the latter operated in towns and populous suburbs. The youth militia involvement in formal politics should be understood in the context of political and governance decay, characterised by the absence of the rule of law, corruption, an economic meltdown, political repression and exclusion (Hills 1997, Shultz and Dew 2006). The youth are also reared in a system that mixes the legacy of the liberation struggle with the realities of poverty, violence, hunger, and regime instability. Such impoverished conditions make the youth a ready target for abuse. What emerged clearly from the interviews was that the youth were less motivated by ideological convictions than by material gain when they joined as party militias. Thus, the work of youth militia intensifies during election periods as they present employment opportunities in a broken economic structure (Human Rights Watch 2008 & 2011, Chakaodza 2009).

Much of the dominant emotions of former youth militia, as I interviewed them, ranged from guilt, self-blame, thirst for revenge, anger towards leaders of their political parties, loneliness, fear of disclosure, depression, lack of interest in family and friends, and stress to thoughts of suicide. These symptoms are associated with poor mental health rather than social depravity. The memory and mental pictures of maiming, torturing and killing civilians is sufficient to trigger mental and emotional collapse among the youth. Literature from psychology indicates that traumatised individuals refrain from participating in groups and seek to be 'lonesome wolves' as they nurse ideas of revenge (Bayer et al. 2007). Konigstein (2013) and Mukashema and Mullet (2013) further postulate that post-traumatic stress disorder impacts on cognitive skills which consequently affects group interaction and collective problem solving. This view is also reinforced by Tate (2015: 5) who opines that 'constant negative thought patterns, such as those found in people exhibiting signs of major depression, are thought to interfere with the adoption of a constructive attitude in interpersonal relations, while [post-traumatic stress disorder] symptomatology interferes with the ability to recollect about trauma. Diminished ability to complete interpersonal problem solving tasks is also consistently found amongst sufferers of depression'. Those who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorders may develop other psychiatric disorders as well (Andreasen 2011, Germond and Cochrane 2010).

Youth in Mashonaland East Province are no exception to the description above. When the young brigades were disbanded on the basis of political exigencies, the result was an ugly residue of a traumatised generation which became a personal and societal nuisance. Obviously, the disbanding of the youth militia did not address reviewing and reversing the violent mind-set that had been inculcated in the brigade members. As a concerned peacebuilder, I asked myself what I could do about this situation. The answer was immediate: research and action. I arranged to conduct research from February 2012 to June 2013. Subjects of inquiry were three primary social institutions – the church, traditional Shona institutions and the Organ for National Healing, Reconciliation and Integration (representing the state) as they all claimed legitimacy to address the healing needs of the traumatised youth.

I chose Mashonaland East Province (Zimbabwe) as an area within which to ground the research. The province is located, as suggested by name, to the east of the capital city Harare. It spans over an area of 32,230 km², with a population of approximately 1.40 million, 48% being men and 52% being women. From the 11 districts that constitute the province, a conservative figure of 12 000 youth militia were recruited - out of a national total of 80 000 – between the year 2000 to 2011 (Mashingaidze 2010). For the purposes of this research, a total of 300 youth of the 11 districts were either snowballed or purposively sampled. To gain a better understanding of the fundamental feelings, attitudes, experiences, and knowledge that influenced the respondents, I used qualitative in-depth interviews. This approach is often called 'collaborative inquiry', 'collaborative knowledge' or 'interventions', and participants are considered co-investigators. Three broad questions were

asked on (1) the youth's narratives of their lives pre-, during and post-elections, (2) reasons that accounted for the perspectives raised, and (3) possible intervention strategies that would address the healing needs of youth. While the first question sought to know how the youth understood and interpreted their role as both perpetrators and victims, the second sought to establish the youth's perception of factors influencing their participation in the youth militia and abuse by political elites. The third question placed the focus on the intervention mechanisms, seeking to explore existing spaces for healing.

My research questions were as follows:

1. What social institutions have tried to provide healing services to traumatised former youth militia, and how effective were their efforts?
2. How and in what ways could I contribute to their healing?

The challenge was to find a research method that reflected these aspirations. The selected research method had to unlock two challenges for me: one, to determine where the healing needs of youth militia fit on the often competing and sometimes mutually reinforcing agendas of social institutions, and the other, to point to the potential direction transformative change could take to improve the problematic everyday life of this 'lost generation'.

Church and traditional Shona healing efforts

Both church and traditional mechanisms oscillated between restorative and retributive scripts, with insufficient clarity on how healing should be attained beyond the available traditional-Christian paradigm. There was no clarity on what healing should concern itself with: spiritual or psychological or both. Layers of complexity were evident in the debates around construction of borderline personality disorders and the efficacy of the social institutions to resolve challenges arising from this. Operationally, I found a confluence of opposing institutions, in most cases working one against the other as they claimed legitimacy to provide healing for the traumatised youth. Evidently, a complex diversity in philosophical, ideological, and methodological goals and orientations toward healing manifested. The church and traditional institutions exhibited different beliefs in spiritual and supernatural powers and their accompanying ritual exercises. In some circumstances, participants had dual loyalties – being Christian and believing in traditional beliefs and practices. Again, both Christian and traditional rituals are not codified in Zimbabwe, making it difficult to differentiate rational from irrational beliefs.

There was a lack of clarity on who should initiate healing, the government or the communities, and how reconciliation should be attained when there were no reforms in the institutions that produced youth militias and violence in the first place. Women groups and affected communities shared the view that the government-initiated Organ for National Healing, Reconciliation and Integration was ill-conceived, ill-timed, incoherent and starved of priority setting and therefore had not met the healing needs of the affected communities and the youth militia. One community member asked 'how can the government engage in the exercise when particular institutions, individually and collectively, fail to uphold human rights protection?'

Despite efforts by indigenous and Christian institutions, the majority of former youth militia continued to show signs of mental fragmentation, phobia and bipolar disorders. It became clear how the 'road to violence' had such a destructive influence on a person and a people, more than leaders have been able to perceive or even willing to admit. What also surprised me was the youth's distrust of the traditional and church's rituals. The majority underwent ritual cleansing, but emerged with doubts. Other research has also shown that 'those suffering from poor mental health in the aftermath of conflict are less likely to support these restorative systems of transitional justice' (Tate 2015: 4). The element of distrust has arisen as a result of the 'spiritual' being used as a manipulative force in the past.

The legitimacy of both traditional and Christian approaches was also under question since both often collaborate with the state. There is a strong connection between the church and the political establishment in Zimbabwe. The question advocacy groups raised was whether the same institutions that promoted violence could be used for healing, reconciliation, and purification of the same youth. Literature has been critical of such relationships where social institutions are conjoined to the state. Luker and Dinnen (2015: 1) point out 'the governance of civic security thus falls within two often tenuously related domains: that one of the state, and that of community. The connections between local and national governance are thin, like the waist of an hourglass'. As stated by Oliver (2011) 'the churches are caught up in a number of crises, causing them to be side-tracked from serious issues that need urgent attention'. Further challenges cited, and congruent with scholarly views, were that although Christianity is used for restoration, it is equally used as a method of raising political consciousness within youth by warring political parties (Ajayi 2014, Chitando and Ezra 2006, Huizer 1987). For example, in the run up to the 2008 and 2013 general elections, it was not a surprise to see the main presidential candidates seated in the midst of popular African Apostolic church gatherings in a bid to recruit youth and solicit votes. In turn, the church leadership sought political protection via electoral support to political parties. Failure to support entailed risking closure of the church by the state agents. One respondent from a community based organisation reiterated 'we have lost trust in the church because of its involvement in politics, and the church should account for the bloodbath in this country'.

In most parts of the rural Mashonaland East, the elders who constitute the traditional '*dare*' (men's forum) are the same traditional healers, chiefs and headmen who played a significant role in recruiting and advocating political violence (BBC 2010 & 2012). Unlike the Christian leaders, the traditional leaders are paid a monthly allowance by the state making them easily manipulated (Nyathi 2001). It emerged that the motives for traditional leaders to align with the state are self-serving, including ensuring their livelihood. The traditional leaders have, therefore, become the source of insecurity in their communities – as they have weakened their positions by changing roles from community guardians to police officers of the state.

The research findings have challenged the assumption that indigenous customs and Christian approaches can effectively address the healing needs of youth militia and advance the goals of civic security. What became apparent during the analysis of the findings were the community's doubts and outright denial of the efficacy of indigenous and Christian approaches, as well as of the Organ of National Healing, Reconciliation and Integration.

The choice of an action research approach

The youth militia's experiences of mental fragmentation (schizophrenia), phobia and bipolar disorders could be researched from many viewpoints: medical, sociological, anthropological and historical. Important as these may be, I believe that the accompanying methodologies could not be as helpful in understanding the complex interactions involved in social institutions' ability of addressing healing needs, as those of action research. Although recent literature in peacebuilding underscores the need for localised inter-organisational cooperation in peace processes, it does not necessarily offer specific research methods and tools that drive the process (Bradford 2008, Byrne 2011, De Coning 2013, Hayman 2013, Mac Ginty and Richmond 2014, Albrecht and Kyed 2015). The lack of visibility of action research, despite the increasing diversity of peacebuilding methods and the various actors involved, has in my view resulted in handicapped analyses or analytical leaps resulting in less than ideal intervention strategies for change. In order to fill this gap, I chose to use action research – both as a research method and a plan of action. Among various forms of action research (participatory action research, external action research, societal action science and cooperative inquiry) I chose 'insider action research' because of my intimate knowledge of the area and issues at stake (McNiff 2013, McNiff and Whitehead 2011). However, I realised that the dividing line between

insider and other action research methods is not easily distinguishable. Admittedly in this particular research, I found them intrinsically intertwined as they overlapped to produce the desired change.

One of the unique advantages of action research is its flexibility in methods and tools. The study employed a methodology that allowed the selected participants to share accounts of experiences and their perceptions of the youth militia problematic as well as their attitudes to the potential role of social institutions in healing the youth. Multiple qualitative methods of data gathering techniques were relied on, namely, in-depth interviews (Babbie 2012, Gray 2014, Yin 2014), focus groups (Sayre 2001, Emmel 2013), observation (Creswell 2013, Stringer 2013), documents, and archival data (Byrne 2011). The field work included in-depth interviews with purposively selected former youth militia, herbalists, traditional healers, chiefs, kraal heads, faith based leaders and community based organisations. The sample was predominantly rural as it reflected the demographic distribution in the province. Besides ensuring multiplicity of voices in sampled participants, the selected methods helped to provide opportunities for participants to reflect, dialogue and give feedback as crucial ingredients for collaborative problem solving.

Guided by the tenets of action research, I chose to employ such research methods that would challenge participants and provide a space where they could examine their entrenched practices and open their minds to change. The selected methods and tools were consistent with the ideals and organising principles of action research that place high importance on participants as co-investigators, co-producers of knowledge and co-agents of change. The research heavily relied on a social constructionist philosophical position, whose epistemological orientation is the participants' contextualised and institutionalised meaning-making. Relatedly, social constructionism functioned as a collaborative philosophy that conceived of problem solving as a product of communal interchange. The multiple uses of qualitative methods of semi-structured interviews, archival research, ethnographic visits and community participation enabled the researched construction of healing to be crosschecked, as it mirrored how Zimbabweans are divided in the manner they interpret and make meaning of the healing needs of former youth militia. While this methodology served the complexity around the conceptualisation and practice of healing well, the results signposted the direction which potential action could take.

Action research

How could I help convert the research findings into action to facilitate healing? The challenge that confronted me as a peacebuilder was how to reconfigure the community's mind-set which is wired toward competition to one that placed high importance on collaborative problem solving (Hart 2008, Mamdani 2014). As observed by Lederach (1997), perceptions of the communities that suffered violence complicate healing and reconciliation processes because of the particular dynamics involved in the formation and maintenance of perceptions. How was I to turn the research findings into a collective dialogue in search for alternative action?

Problem-solving dialogues

Any solution to the threatening trauma crisis could not be obtained without a proper dialogue involving all stakeholders – a platform where invited participants were capacitated to speak freely as they articulated their opinion. This was a space where former youth militia spoke for themselves, reflecting on their involvement in violence, their current predicament and aspirations. In order to progress toward the desired change, and guided by the principle of cooperation as a critical ingredient for action research, I brought together 30 participants to a 2 day 'problem solving' dialogue. As a cost-effective measure, the dialogue meetings took place on 21 and 22 March 2013 in Marondera town, a central point for all the districts in Mashonaland East Province. The group of participants comprised of a representation of former youth militia (boys and girls, a total of 10 from 7 districts were in attendance), headmen, traditional leaders, councillors, bishops from mainstream and Pentecostal churches and private civil organisations.

The central objective of the dialogues was to work towards the development of inclusive, participatory, and negotiated strategies of addressing trauma in the Province. The first day, 21 March 2013, was characterised by brainstorming. As a facilitator I asked participants to identify persistent problems and pressing issues affecting the youth in their respective districts as well as the ramifications this has for the entire communities. I also encouraged them to examine current trends in youth behaviour, re-examine practices and institutions (social and political) that produce youth militia, brainstorm on new possible intervention methods and, in groups, deliberate on what needed to change and ways of advancing the change. Although I was the driving force behind the dialogue by the mere fact that I was the one who had organised it, I tried not to control any issues raised by participants. However, to manage group dynamics, I employed participatory methods to ensure that all participants took turns to share their experiences and freely exchange their opinions. As planned, I shared my experiences of dealing with healing and purification of former youth militia in Lira District, Uganda, under the auspices of United Movement to End Child Soldiering (UMECS). The thrust there was on the simultaneous application of mental health care as well as Christian and traditional rituals such as *mato oput*. Although I was aware I was not supposed to offer any template or blueprint on how to address the healing needs as a facilitator, as a change agent, I was compelled to find a negotiated inclusion of mental health an innovative idea. Although healing literature regards indigenous customs and Christian approaches as important vehicles to purify and heal, very few studies have shown a direct link between mental health and healing and reconciliation of youth militia. In Zimbabwe, sadly, a heavy reliance on indigenous customs and Christian approaches had obscured potential alternatives such as mental health care. Again, peacebuilders in Zimbabwe have not yet explored the potential of mental health care as a useful alternative in circumstances where both indigenous and Christian approaches have lost their legitimacy in addressing the personality disorders manifesting even in ex-combatants. Evidently there were neither benchmarks nor reference points for participants to draw lessons about this topic in the context of Zimbabwe.

On the second day, 22 March 2013, I set participants in motion through group and feedback sessions. In the process, I was jotting down anecdotal notes in my reflective journal. Discussions focused primarily on questions such as: Can mental health approaches be an alternative in circumstances where traditional customs, Christianity and state efforts have failed? Where the traditional and Christian approaches have limited success, what can we learn from the expertise, practices and tools of mental health in dealing with traumatic disorders of the youth? What kind of mental health care can the youth returning from violence expect to get? The discussions became a game changer as ideas emerged and participants requested more information. From their anxiety I saw the need to mount a one day conference to further explore the viability of mental health care as an alternative tool for healing.

A one day conference

The next step was to organise a one-day conference, which was scheduled for 24 April 2013. In consultation with stakeholders, the venue had to shift from Marondera to Chivu. The change of venue was necessitated by the need to make use of experienced psychologists and psychiatrists resident at Chivu hospital, who had volunteered to be key facilitators. A total of 40 participants were invited, ranging from former youth militias, traditional leaders, bishops, representatives from political parties, doctors to peacebuilders. I also invited other mental health experts from Harare. Two psychosomaticians and two psychiatrists were called in as keynote speakers. The central objective was to furnish participants with more information on the efficacy of mental health care and sensitizing stakeholders on the viability of mental health care as an alternative for trauma healing. The subordinate objective was to provide a platform for further dialogue and the sharing of professional knowledge from various stakeholder constituencies represented. The health experts explained how they heal various mental health problems using rigorous empirical evidence based tools. They used examples of healed individuals to reinforce their arguments. As they explained, they

pointed to developed tools that can predict the occurrence and prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorders as an added value of mental health approaches. Participants also learned that the psychopathological disorders that come as a result of transitioning from a life of violence to a civilian life do not only require traditional and Christian approaches, important as they may be, but also specialised mental health care. Subsequent meetings that followed after this ground breaking conference saw a mental health approach being seriously considered as an alternative for healing. This necessitated the creation of an inter-organisational advisory committee with the mandate to implement suggestions from participants. In the process, I was collecting data, taking down observations about the group dynamics and recording the shift in attitudes toward mental health care. This involved doing a summative evaluation of whether my action research steps were actually forging pathways to a desired change.

An inter-organisational advisory committee

By 16 June 2013, an inter-organisational advisory committee comprised of psychiatrists as well as representatives of the church, state, civic organisations and traditional institutions had been established to provide further dialogue, design specific intervention methods for healing, implement the suggestions from the conference concerning how the youth themselves can be agents of change, and provide safeguards on how the intervention would fit in with the political power complex. Among other key responsibilities, the committee was mandated to find ways of building and strengthening infrastructures for peace such as community-militia dialogue, making alliances and sensitising political parties about the ramifications of involving youth in sponsored violence. The goal of such an engagement was premised on the assumption that communities can only provide formidable resistance and neutralise political manipulation and co-option of youth when they are healthy, organised, sensitised and engaged. Central to their tasks was mobilising financial resources for medical examinations of former youth militia. This involved working in partnership with private civil society organizations in and beyond Mashonaland East Province. To date 300 youth have received medical assistance. Though the figure is still insignificant, a journey begins with a single step. In order to prevent further relapses of political violence, the committee continues to secure medical assistance and places at technical colleges for skills development for interested youth. Their advisory work and attendant interventions are continuously backed up by research, monitoring and evaluating the rise and fall of mental disorders, keeping clear records of progress made and potential militating factors as well as the consistency of communication.

Conclusion

Building peace is a political enterprise that alters power and societal dynamics. Addressing youth brings with it complex power politics of the state. In a politically polarised and authoritarian context, one of the obvious risks was to misconstrue the project as a regime change agenda. However, I always felt inspired by Niccolo Machiavelli's observation, 'There is nothing more difficult to plan, more doubtful of success, more dangerous to manage than the creation of a new system. The innovator has the enmity of all who profit by the preservation of the old system and only lukewarm defenders by those who would gain by the new system'.

A question comes to the forefront: why was action research successful in shifting the complex, polarised and competing traditional-Christian paradigms of healing? The answer lies in its principles, theory and practice. While some research methods exercise power over the community, action research promotes power within the communities. Inclusion, participation, deliberation and dialogue are the critical threads that tie the various elements of action research together forming a formidable force for peacebuilding. As exemplified by the youth militia case study, inter-organisational cooperation was the distinctive characteristic that revolutionised the healing approaches. From the research findings, the putative indigenous customs and Christian tools had lost their legitimacy because of the distorted, dissolved and confusing boundaries between the

functions of the state and those of traditional and Christian leaders. One can observe that a change in the political order would promptly necessitate a change in practice by the community institutions. As an action oriented researcher, what I learnt from the use of action research is that (1) the researcher has very little say on the outcomes of the action, (2) it is difficult to heal trauma and there is a very real possibility that many, even most of these youth militia will suffer from PTSD for the rest of their lives, and (3) given that treatment is so problematic, prevention is so much more important. Can political parties be urged to commit themselves not to use youth in this way in the future?

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Using restorative justice approaches with ex-prisoners and their families: an action research project in Zimbabwe

Ntombizakhe Moyo

Introduction

The criminal justice system worldwide largely works on a retributive foundation. An offender who is alleged to have committed a crime against a victim (typically another individual) is prosecuted by the state and, if found guilty, is subject to punishment. Two points should be noted about retributive justice: the victim is largely excluded from the process and there is an assumption that the punishment – which may involve imprisonment – will help the offender to reform. Zimbabwe's prison population (18 857 in January, 2015 [Institute for Criminal Policy Research 2016]) is very much subject to this approach.

By contrast with retributive justice, restorative justice focuses on building a sense of self-worth and personal responsibility among offenders, and often involves efforts to build or rebuild the relationship between offenders and their victims. This may occur through mediation sessions where stories can be told and heard, apologies made and forgiveness asked for and given. Restorative justice can occur within an essentially retributive justice framework, perhaps for certain types of crimes, and allows for sentencing options other than imprisonment e.g., mandatory participation in a victim-offender mediation process. It has often been argued that many of the methods used by African communities to deal with anti-social behaviours involve strong elements of restorative justice. Individuals are asked to take responsibility for their behaviour (e.g., by apologising and possibly making reparations) and the community is asked to forgive and accept the offender.

A non-technical discussion of the main tenets of restorative justice is appropriate at this point, drawing on Strang and Braithwaite (2001), Zehr (2002), Newell (2007), Johnstone (2011a; 2011b). The message of much retributive justice to prisoners is that they are bad and always will be. Prisoners deserve to be treated harshly by society because they need to pay the price for what they have done and also because this will act as a deterrent – to the individual concerned and to others – to such behaviour. Underneath is an understanding that they cannot reform and cannot recover from what they have done because, deep down, they are bad. Once an offender has been sentenced by a court, prison officers take over as society's agents of retribution and frequently use their power over prisoners to humiliate them on a day to day basis. On their release, ex-prisoners are likely to suffer further rejection from their families and communities and so naturally gravitate towards other ex-prisoners and criminal activities.

To those committed to restorative justice, such an approach is counter-productive and in fact promotes the bad behaviour it aims to deter. Restorative justice has a higher view of human nature. It separates a person's actions from his/her essential goodness and emphasises that a person can turn away from bad behaviour. It therefore sees the responsibility of the criminal justice system as being to safeguard those in its care and aiding their integration back into society. The restorative justice approach emphasises that an important reason for high rates of crime is the loss of the link between punishment and public shaming, a link which is often still strong in rural African communities. Punishment as provided by the criminal justice and prison systems reinforces a sense of badness and provides very little reason for behavioural change.

A public examination of the offender and his/her actions, on the other hand, makes it clear that certain behaviour is unacceptable to the community and that remorse, apology, reparations and a commitment to change his/her behaviour are required. Once these occur, the matter has been dealt with and there is no reason to revisit it. What is needed, therefore, is to find ways of shaming offenders, not in order to send them on a long term guilt trip or to permanently stigmatise them, but in a way which aids their reintegration into the community.

This chapter focusses on the outcomes of interventions made with 12 ex-prisoners associated with the Second Chance Rehabilitation Trust (SCRC) in Bulawayo, which provides vocational skills training to assist the reintegration of ex-prisoners.

The research action project

Seven of the ex-prisoners had spent more than one time in prison. In terms of the most recent crimes, three had been jailed for fraud, two for armed robbery, one for rape, two for housebreaking, two for robbing people on the streets and two for murder. All spoke of their prison experience as having been extremely harsh and violent. The horrors of this experience has acted as a major deterrent for them to engage in crime now that they are released but this was counter-balanced by the desperate economic situation which the ex-prisoners found themselves in and the consequent temptation to re-engage in crime to meet their needs..

They reported that there was virtually no rehabilitation work in prisons. Depending on the length of their sentence, prisoners are taken to work in the fields between 5am and 11 am, have a meal and then rest between 3pm and 5 am the next morning. In the words of one participant, ‘... working on the fields, it’s not fun I tell you ... you are expected to bend all the way through, say maybe for seven hours; if you stand up, you will regret it.’

On release, they enter a very difficult socio-economic environment. Nine of the 12 had been married prior to imprisonment but all these marriages had ended while they were in prison and their children were now in the care of their ex-wife and her family; six had subsequently remarried. Zimbabwe’s unemployment rates are extremely high, in addition to which there is stigma and active discrimination against ex-prisoners who cannot, for example, even get a licence to be a street vendor in Bulawayo. Police harassment of ex-prisoners was reported as being common and often involved demands for money.

The fact that these prisoners had joined SCRC and also agreed to engage in the interventions suggests that they were serious about their rehabilitation. An underlying assumption of the research was that the families of prisoners are indirect victims of their imprisonment, particularly as a result of stigma and increased economic hardship. Together with high levels of conflict between ex-prisoners and their families, these mean that the relationship between ex-prisoners and their families is typically very strained; improving this relationship is critical to their successful reintegration. Lushaba (2012) and Harris (2014) have discussed the restorative justice work of Phoenix Zululand, a South African NGO working with current prisoners and their families. The Conversations in Families and the Family Conference utilised Phoenix Zululand material.

Four different interventions were made which translated into eleven meetings of varying lengths over 12 months, ending in early August 2014. The meetings were classified under River of Life stories (ROLs), Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) basic and advanced workshops, Conversations in Families (CIF) and a Family Conference. These meetings are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of activities and the expected outcomes

Activity	Intended outcome	Frequency and duration
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River of Life storytelling	Identifying where the participants were in life and their experiences, needs, and expectations	One four hour session
AVP workshops (basic and advanced)	Equipping participants with nonviolent conflict handling skills and developing interpersonal/communication skills	Two two-day workshops
Conversations in families	Creating a realisation of the need to restore/build family relationships and the ways this might happen	Five one to two-hour sessions
Family conference	Restore family relationships by creating a platform where ex-offenders tell their stories to family members; where family members tell ex-prisoners about the consequences of their actions; and where apologies can be offered and forgiveness granted	One half-day session

in order to assess the outcome of the interventions, separate focus groups for ex-prisoners and their families were held at the end of the 12 month period. In addition, over the course of the year, five meetings were held with the advisory board, where plans for and evaluations of interventions were carried out. For reasons of space, only the results for ex-prisoners are reported here. The following questions were asked during the focus group with seven ex-prisoners held on 21 August, 2015.

- What are the key things you remember from the ROL, AVP, CIF and FC?
- .What impact, if any, do you think these had in your life (for example, the way you view yourself, the way you relate with others around you and your family members, the way you handle conflicts)?
- Given a chance to recommend just one of these programs to be used to train other ex-prisoners, which one will you recommend? Why?

Evaluating the outcomes

River of Life storytelling

In the first of the interventions, participants were given a chance to share their life stories, where their lives likened to a flowing river. It is generally understood that personal and communal telling and re-telling of stories play critical roles in conflict resolution, trauma recovery and restorative justice (Zehr 2008: 5) and Lushaba and Shandu (2012) point to the therapeutic effects of storytelling among South African prisoners. Two of the stories shared concerned murder and their tellers were emotional while narrating the incidents, although they seemed cheerful afterwards.

In all cases, quotations represent generally-held opinions among the ex-prisoners. Prisoners remembered each other's stories very clearly and found it comforting that others were on a similar path to themselves. The common themes were peace of mind, learning the importance of having good friends and avoiding alcohol and drugs.

Most participants agreed with Promise who said that he experienced peace of the mind as a result of sharing his life story:

I have never experienced peace of mind and peace of the heart in a long time; that day began a new chapter, especially for my life here in SCRC. ... I was fairly new here and what worried me the most was that I did not know what everyone was thinking about me. That day gave me a chance to explain myself and it made me comfortable around here and still is.

Related comments were that 'hearing stories shared by others made me feel at home, seeing that I have people who understand me, people who are like minded with me, people who desire to do things right' and 'the ROLs helped me to develop trust with some people here... I'm free now to discuss issues with some people here.'

Choice of the right kind of friends was mentioned a number of times:

...I grew up in a middle class family, I went to a good school, had a good professional qualification, and a good job, earned fine money, I really made enough... But I played with friends who were never content, we were all from fine families, but we needed more. We loved fun, as you know fun calls for much spending... then we thought of ways of doing fast cash and we started car hijacking...

While these two had stable living situations before their move into crime, others came from family backgrounds where crime was the norm and where children did not go to school or receive any skills training.

Most participants alluded to the fact that they had been involved in heavy drinking and drug use at the time they committed crimes. Moreover, their gains from crime had not gone into anything meaningful but into more drink and drugs. One participant spoke of how he got his drinking under control and has been able to buy the equipment to establish himself as a plumber.

Overall, there were very clear memories of each other's stories a year later and the lessons learned continued to have currency in the lives of the participants.

AVP workshops (basic and advanced)

Ten participants participated in the AVP workshops and seven took part in both. The main themes which emerged were an understanding of what violence means, anger management, development of skills in handling conflict and improved inter-personal relationships,

The participants said that they gained knowledge about ways of handling conflict and preventing violence. They came to realise that some things which they thought were OK are in fact violent:

... As a traditional man, I did not know that beating wives was violence, I have always thought I was doing the right thing ... I have been thinking largely about this thing and I really had to realise that, our elders were right when they said *induku kayakhi umunzi* (an Ndebele saying literally meaning you will never establish a meaningful home through beating those you are building with) ... Now, I work on *okwonakele ngomlomo kulungiswa yiwo futhi* (if someone wrongs you use words to fix it).

Several participants reported that the AVP sessions helped them with anger management skills.

I get angry easily, which comes from the way I was treated as a child. When someone wrongs me to the extent that I feel the kind of feeling I felt then, I end up hitting that person using anything. Yah, I have been listening to all the lessons. For now when someone does wrong I just walk away to avoid beating them ...

Another said that previously a day could not pass without him fighting someone (indeed, he asked the other participants the last time they saw him fighting and they attested that it has been a long

while). Another said that 'When my wife starts an argument, I just walk away and leave her talking by herself ... she can spend the whole day complaining about lack of nit-grits'.

All seven participants indicated that the training helped them to adopt new strategies of dealing with conflicts. One spoke of a changed attitude towards corporal punishment:

I used to beat my children each time they do wrong, but as for now I no longer, we now talk like men ... it's amazing they just got to do right things on their own ... that has reduced the tension we always had ... because my wars with my children always translated to my wars with their mother and vice-versa.

This is not to say that all participants fully understand the concept of nonviolence. One told the following account about a 'nonviolent' intervention on his part:

Everyone now knows that I hate violence, I take no nonsense. One day these two men were fighting, and I was called to stop. In the past I could join in the fight and take a side and obviously I could win, but as of now I tried to separate the fighting giants but to no avail. I then took a branch of a tree and I beat the two and they stopped ... my nonviolence worked, they would have killed each other...

All participants reported improved inter-personal relationships. Much reference was made to the AVP principles of treating everyone with respect. Representative quotes are as presented below:

When we were doing the name game, I named myself 'Promise' ... Now there is something you did not know - this was a promise I made in my heart. I was actually promising that I will start doing right things and I have been ... I get up early with everyone, assist in the family business ... my actions have reduced the tensions we used to have at home. Everyone thought I was lazy and stubborn. I hated that and it made me a bitter person ...

I learnt that everyone deserves my respect no matter who they are ... even if they don't do well towards me or anyone, they have to be respected Even my little child deserves to be respected by me ... since the day I learned this, I have this thought deep within me.

... I love expressing my heart out [and] I could just argue for the sake of arguing. But because of this course of AVP, you know, I now know how to close mine [mouth] and listen ... when you listen you hear the cry on the other side and usually that cry reveals the problem. Then we deal with it ...

At first I thought these sessions were not practical. One day my wife was yelling at the top of her voice, I just stopped what I was doing, sat down and listened to her. She stopped yelling and sat down and used a calm voice to ask for my opinion regarding the discussion. We settled the problem ...

Participants suggested that their family members also needed to be trained in AVP practices and a basic workshop was subsequently provided.

Conversations in Families

Ten ex-prisoners had participated in at least one CIF session, while seven participated in all five sessions. Participants were asked to share whether and if so how CIF has assisted them (or not) to improve the way they relate with their family members. There was some merging of AVP and CIF sessions in the minds of some participants. It is important to note that the marriages of all of the ex-prisoners broke up while they were in prison and all had subsequently re-married. Their reference to their families very largely refers to their new families.

All participants said that CIF had enabled them to realise that they needed to build right relationships with their family members, demonstrated through their attitudes and actions towards them. The following are some representative quotes:

My favourite talk [during Conversations in Families] was that day when we discussed that our families deserve our best ... It dawned in me that I should not embarrass them, especially being from a Christian family. I have come to realise that they all need me, I need them all and I have to be good to all of them ...

... It is from the Conversation in Families that I came to realize how important my family is. When I realize that I have wronged them, I swallow my pride and apologised ... But I don't like it when they make me feel stupid and start calling me by names. I wish they could also learn these things.

I liked the message that was written in your T- shirt you [Zakhe] were wearing one of the days - *Peace begins with me*. I have made that to be my motto. I get home, greet my beautiful wife and smile to my children. I now try to buy them the little goodies I find on my way home from here. I make it a point that I buy things like bread and sour milk for the children at least every day. Dad's thing (beer) is now for weekends ...

Family conference

Seven ex-prisoners and five family members attended a family conference (FC) as the final intervention. The format included discussions in family groups but also presentations and discussions involving the whole group. This lasted five hours, and was followed by training in liquid soap making, in the hope of helping the participants to earn a living. The aim of the FC was to provide an opportunity for ex-prisoners to deal with the indirect victims of imprisonment – their families.

'I thought I had done enough through serving my sentence' was a common statement by ex-prisoners in their evaluations of the family conference, but the FC helped them to realise that while a prison term met the requirements of the state, it did not necessarily deal with the victims. The FC was aimed at restoration of relationships between the offender and their family members by creating a platform for apology and forgiveness.

Each participant was given the chance to draw his or her River of Life, as they had done at the very start of the interventions, and to share his or her story to the whole group. Then the family members spoke about the difficulties they faced as a result of the offence. There was recognition of the harm caused by offence to family members, who were often treated poorly by neighbours and the police and conflicts with other relatives, who felt that the offender should be permanently banished from the family. They also spoke of the embarrassment they incurred, the fear that victims might come for revenge and the money they lost in paying bribes to get a shorter jail sentence. Emotions were evoked as family members and ex-prisoners heard new things about each other. I then asked each ex-prisoner and their family members to share, publicly, the feelings they have about each other.

All seven offenders showed remorse and words of forgiveness were uttered, in line with Braithwaite's (2002) concept of reintegrative shaming. In one instance, the aunt of an ex-prisoner asked for forgiveness, on behalf of the family, for 'failing him', as she expressed it. The ex-prisoner's reflection on this was as follows:

Since I came back home, I have always felt as a misfit but that day, eish, I felt as if I'm new straight from the box. I felt as if I have never done wrong ... but my aunt's husband seems not to believe in me, I don't know why ... I will prove him wrong. I'm prepared to face all of them [the rest of the family] and tell them that I have changed ... Seeing my aunt apologizing to me and taking my apology was tough. I tell you what from that day I understood her better; she is now my pillar of strength ...

The participants spoke again of the learning they gained from each other's life stories:

For me it, the truth is, I was encouraged to soldier on, I thought I was the only one with a difficult family; it was encouraging to here that other family members are like my family. Honestly. I have to keep doing the right thing, even if you are called names on a daily basis.

The nephew of one ex-prisoner spoke of the calamities which had befallen the family as a consequence of the offence:

... I'm glad that today he made a public declaration that he is not going to go that route anymore. I will take your message to the elders ... we have a lot of calamities in the family, who knows? it could be that spirits are angry ... especially for this Shona guy that you killed, twelve mysterious deaths since after the incident ... have you thought of apologizing to them?

This perhaps connects with what Ladley (1982) identifies as the *Ngozi* spirit among Shona people, where the family of the killed person manipulates spirits to bring revenge on the killer and his family; paying reparations to the victim's family is a way of preventing this. Two other participants indicated that they wished to see their victims in order to apologise and apologize but that their victims are in South Africa.

Evaluation by family members and the advisory group

Evaluations were carried out with family members and the advisory group at the end of the year. For reasons of space, these are only summarised here but the full versions are in Moyo (2016, ch. 7).

The response from family members were mixed. Some saw signs of transformation in attitudes, behaviour and language of their ex-prisoner and some reported now being able to reason with them:

...Two months back, he had a problem with his wife ... he called me and told me about it. [This was very unusual]. Usually, he was a master of all problems. His wife was about to leave him over an extra marital affair [of his]. We talked about it at length, helping him realise that issues of extra marital affairs are destructive to his family ... for one time I knocked sense into his head and he always makes reference to the talk ... he apologized to his wife, which was unlike him and vowed to change ... since that day I haven't witnessed any problems in their marriage ...

My brother has changed in a way that is clear to all ... The young man was violent, he could just provoke a fight anywhere with anyone, but these days he has gone low. He used to fight with the wife almost daily ... every weekend we were always in trouble with them fighting ... but now the wife is the one who is on the extreme and he is always patient with her...

However, the road is not always smooth. The second participant referred to above had just days before gone missing. It was rumoured that he was on the run after stealing money from his roommate. And some were pessimistic about the possibility of change: '... I can't say much, but some of these people you can't change, ZPS [Zimbabwe Prison Service] could not change them though its punitive means, they have been turned into concrete. Once a thief, always a thief!'

Several members of the advisory group were staff members of SCRC and so had the opportunity to interact with and observe ex-prisoners during their manual work, as well as during and after the interventions. This allowed some verification of whether the truth was being told and whether words were converted into action. They noticed changes in the lives of some ex-prisoners: 'There is a reflection of a huge change in the lives of some of these people. You listen to their talk after that day, they have nothing to hide ... '. 'Before training when you speak they used to search for

loopholes which they could use against you. Not now ...'. Interactions between the ex-prisoners had improved:

There used to be a lot of squabbles at work ... there was clear divisions and tensions among groups, but now they have reduced people are able to tolerate each other...the language they use to correct each other is much better now, they use to belittle each other, but signs of respect are now seen here and there...

Again, the results were mixed and the advisory group also noted a tendency for positive changes in some participants to fade away over time.

Summary and conclusion

The participants gained a sense of identity from devising and sharing their life stories. The public confession and asking for forgiveness in the family conference seemed very genuine and may well reduce the likelihood of reoffending. Interventions need to be offered not only to offenders but also to their families, who will facilitate their reintegration into the community.

I am in no doubt that there was a significant change in a number of the participants over the year, shown in changes of attitude, changes of action and even the words they speak. It was amazing to listen to the terminology used by the participants during the evaluation, which had greatly changed compared to the language used during the earlier intervention sessions. But this was by no means true for all ex-prisoners; some started to change but have seemingly given up.

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11

Chapter

Reintegrating former child soldiers in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo

Jean Chrysostome K. Kiyala

Introduction

This chapter documents an action research project aimed at helping the reintegration of former child soldiers in four communities of North Kivu Province, and helping prevent other boys from becoming child soldiers. The fieldwork was carried out between May and December, 2014.

Thousands of boys aged as young as ten years have either been forced to join local armed groups and the national army, or have joined them voluntarily. Each year, hundreds ‘self-demobilise’, often by approaching rehabilitation centres like the Catholic NGO, Caritas Goma, where they spend up to six months; the vast majority are subsequently reunited with their families. The problem, in essence, is what to do with these former child soldiers. Should they be held accountable for their actions as child soldiers as a condition of being accepted back by their communities and, if so, what mechanisms should be employed? Should they be forgiven? Will the accountability and acceptance mechanisms convince them not to re-join an armed group? It should be noted that the process has implications not only for former child soldiers; it will also influence others who might become child soldiers and so has a preventative potential.

Currently, in terms of accountability, cases involving former child soldiers are referred to peace tribunals and high courts, since formal justice mechanisms are non-existent for children under the age of 18. It came out clearly in interviews and focus groups that former child soldiers were concerned about the harsh way the local criminal justice system deals with them. This is known among child soldiers as *kufunga* (a *Kiswahili* word used for incarceration) and they detest these structures. Child soldiers declared that they preferred justice approaches that do not treat them as accused or criminals but rather as partners in solving the problem.

The traditional conflict resolution mechanism of *baraza* provides such a mechanism, although its structures and operations in many communities have suffered as a result of on-going violence. The concept of *baraza* has long been used with many variations across central Africa. In general, it provides a platform where conflicts can be discussed and is a forum for accountability for violations of social norms and resolution of interpersonal and inter-community conflict. *Baraza* processes are frequently used to help prevent and deal with family conflicts and disputes over land. It has the potential to deal with issues of accountability of former child soldiers and their reintegration back into their communities. The *baraza* concept utilises the principle of the African palaver, here understood as a ‘dialoguing institution of unlimited domain ... Every participant is a dialoguing partner with full powers to demand to speak and to do so for as long as is necessary’ (Ngoyi 2006: 173).

According to several authors (Aertsen 2008; Kamwimbi 2008; Savage and Vanspauwen 2008; Savage and wa Kambala 2008), the formal justice system in the DRC has significant limitations when it comes to administering justice and settling conflicts. Accordingly, local leaders take initiatives to deal

with conflicts and prevent their degeneration into violence. Customary courts are still widely used, though they remain subject to criticisms around 'discrimination towards women, noncompliance with international justice standards, no legal competence for serious crime' (Aertsen 2008: 57).

In 2008, following five years of civil war and inter-ethnic conflicts in North Kivu, the Pacification and Concord Commission, churches and NGOs came up with a resolution to establish a provincial-level structure for peace, reconciliation, social reintegration and development. This became known as *Baraza La Wazee Intercommunautaire* (BWI) [Intercommunity Council of Elders/notables]. There has been a renewed emphasis on solving conflicts by means of 'dialogue and ritual', with sanctions involving 'acknowledgment of guilt, requests for forgiveness, promises, rituals of purification'. The focal point has not been the perpetrators, but rather the sources of conflict (Aertsen 2008: 60).

As we shall see, there is a ready acceptance of 'western' restorative justice methods. Their similarity with baraza practices gives confidence that the challenge of dealing with former child soldiers can be handled at the community level.

The action research process

The research involved three distinct phases and these are reflected in this chapter. Phase 1 reports representative statements of the 282 people who participated, including 73 former child soldiers, direct victims and community members – made during the peacemaking circles. Phase 2 involved evaluating the outcome of peacemaking circles by comparing the before versus after attitudes of people who participated in circles with similar people who did not participate. Phase 3, which is reported in less detail, involved training 1165 people, including 60 former child soldiers, in restorative justice practices.

Phase 1. Peacemaking circles

The theory of 'acknowledgement' which underpins restorative justice is also anchored in the African social ethos and an important question is whether traditional practices like baraza can be utilized to deal with the reintegration of former child soldiers. Peacemaking circles (for an explanation of their operation, see Pranis 2005; 2013) were established under a broad *baraza* framework in four North Kivu communities - Kiwanja, Rutshuru, Goma and Masisi – each of which had experienced high levels of violence since the mid-1990s. Preliminary contacts were made with victims who had suffered at the hands of child soldiers, and the child soldiers. Each of them was accompanied by their supporters (family members and parents/guardians). Prior to participation in the circles, separate meetings were held primary victims and their supporters and with child perpetrators and their supporters to explain the process and encourage full participation. Participation in the circles was voluntary.

During the circles, child soldiers spoke first, narrating the circumstances of their recruitment and the conditions under which they lived in the armed groups. In particular, they explained the crimes they had committed and the circumstances that led them to participate in such acts. Then the victims - mostly women who were abducted and raped in the bush and men who were forced to transport looted properties – told of their experiences and expressed their anguish and pain. Other victims included those who had lost homes and personal belongings or were injured as a result of armed conflict. There were also indirect victims, whose relatives were killed or injured or whose houses were damaged during attacks by armed groups.

Not all former child soldiers chose to speak. Others listened, while surrounded by relatives, victims and their supporters and community members, including school children and youths. Those present, it seemed, listened with passion and compassion to the traumatic experiences of both victims and child soldiers and 92 per cent of the 282 participants expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the process. It emerged from the circles that these processes could be the way of resolving some aspects

of the child soldiering problem, particularly accountability and reintegration. After each circle, the research team met and evaluated the process and planned the next action in a democratic fashion.

Both qualitative and quantitative data are presented. The quotations presented are representative of those made during the peacemaking circles.

Child soldier's stories

Child soldier A

One day, in 2009... I arrived around Kiwanja and found boys picking up ammunitions abandoned in the bush and I joined the Mai Mai soldiers... I joined the armed group because of the influence of fellow young people I met during war... I spent three months in the bush where I got involved in criminal acts such as killing and raping. I escaped and I am back to school. I ask you to forgive me... (What about children who are not here?)... I ask forgiveness from all victims present in this circle... the persons I hurt are not here... I cannot remember them... from other villages.... I ask you to forgive also other child soldiers with whom we carried out these odious acts.

Child soldier B

I joined the Nyatura militia to fight the M23 rebels who abducted my elder brother and my young brother... We escaped after the M23 [a major rebel group] were defeated by the DRC forces... I ask for forgiveness to victims who are present. I don't remember the people I killed and their families because we were at war and operated at night... I also ask forgiveness in the name of other child soldiers who have died yet they also committed crimes, and in the name of those who are still living, yet are not attending peacemaking circles.

Child soldier C:

I was a driver and commander in the Mai Mai movement. I regret the crimes I committed and asked for forgiveness from the victims who are participating in this programme. I joined the Mai Mai to defend my community against the evil acts of the M23. Several times we were bound by strict rules not to commit crimes such as looting and raping... But there were times when we lapsed into killing as part soldiering service demands. I feel sorry for my friends... This week some of them here in Rutshuru have gone to the bush to join one armed group (unnamed).

Child soldier D:

D was a soccer player. As they played the Mai Mai team, violence broke out and some village people were killed. He decided to join the Nyatura so that he could fight against the Mai Mai:

...death was always close at hand... they could die at any instance, concluding "Adventurers join armed groups. But if I am interested in this life [soldiering] I would rather join government forces... there is a lot of suffering in armed groups... I am sorry for my misdeeds. I ask you to forgive me.

Victims' stories

After child soldiers finished telling their stories, it was the turn of victims to share their pains and how their lives have been affected as a result of atrocities they suffered. Survivors reported that

militiamen who kidnapped them were often youngsters. In the bush adult men carried out sexual assaults but even young soldiers did the same. Participants did not object to granting forgiveness to child soldiers. They instead, blamed insecurity and the incapacity of the Government to protect people in war zones.

Victim A:

I was kidnapped from our home and taken to the bush by militiamen where I was systematically raped ... tied with ropes for five days... the militiamen brought me back and damped me at our placed in the middle of the night... then they ran back into the bush. No arrest has been made... I don't know who those armed men were [Face down, not looking at the audience]... I have received no help... I don't know how to survive.

Victim B (a teacher from Kiwanja):

I was kidnapped by child soldiers on my way from school. I was taken to the bush where I was several times beaten... my right hand becomes paralysed from time to time... one day I was beaten severely and was left half-dead. I was miraculously released by another soldier and came back home... I have never received any help

Victim C:

My grandmother was raped and killed in the field. She was found dead. We never knew who killed her. But for sure she was murdered by militiamen who operate around our town. No arrest has been made since this happened in 2009.

Victim D (an indirect victim) reported that her two daughters were kidnapped by armed boys for seven days, where both girls were systematically abused and raped. One was present at the circle but could not talk about her ordeal. Her father spoke of the power of forgiveness and its impact on the healing of his family.

Victim E (a male teacher from Rutshuru) explained that he was in his house when a girl soldier made her way inside and forced him to carry looted goods to their camp in the jungle:

With other soldiers and abducted civilians, we walked a long distance towards Busanza village at gunpoint. When we arrived at Katunduwe village, just close to their camp, another soldier released me after beating me... I constantly feared for my life, not knowing what my end will be.

After listening to victims, the members of the community, including learners and supporters of victims and child soldiers, expressed their views.

Voices of the community

There was a remarkable willingness on the part of many community members to forgive, often specifically linked to Christian beliefs. A father whose two teenage daughters were abducted from their home by young soldiers and held in the bush for a week stated that he has forgiven his daughters' abductors and aggressors. The audience was very moved as this father offered forgiveness to those soldiers who abused his daughters. He said that his family has come to terms with their tragic experience and there was not much he could expect from justice or from the perpetrators:

I met one of the boys at the court while the other had been on the run. Their family was to pay the monetary reparation demanded by the court amounted to 10,000 Congolese Francs,

approximately 1000 USD. When I looked at this poverty-stricken family, I wondered whether they should sell their fields and house to compensate my family... we decided to forget about seeking money and getting the perpetrators jailed. Our daughter is relieved and I appeal to other youngsters present here to refrain from joining armed groups. It was very bad what we experienced. But we can forgive these child soldiers.

There was a recognition that child soldiers themselves were victims. A member of a child care NGO based in in Rutshuru spoke at length on this:

They (child soldiers) are not heroes... they are victims... but they have a criminal tone when addressing each other... not heroes because they come to loot the community they are supposed to protect. They like eating meat... they are there to make road-blocks. They don't protect their communities. They are there to take by force what they community can use for its development.

François (an 18-year old young man from Goma) explains:

Our communities create armed groups to defend themselves because the Government is not doing it... this occasions child soldiering phenomenon... there is no justice... people are jailed... there is no trial... They are enrolled assuming they will be heroes to fight for their communities... they are victims.

The child care worker commented further during a personal interview:

There is no public hearing of the stories of child soldiers... If this kind of justice was taking place, it could have discouraged other children from joining armed groups. Alternatively, children who have been reinserted into community could be invited in a big hall where they meet with victims and their supporters. These forums could be facilitated by community members who are in charge of youths under 18 years. This public hearing could have the effect to bring awareness among ignorant children and shame rebels who recruit them... Children are perpetrators but not deciders. So it is important to uncover adults' lies and immoral techniques that they ruthlessly employ to lure children. Some of these public hearing programmes could be carefully chosen and broadcast on radios. So far "Peace Radio", owned by the Mission of the United Nations for Stabilisation of Congo, has been encouraging children to defect armed groups and proceed to CTOs where they will be secured and taken care of. This broadcasting station can be used during public hearing of child soldiers and their victims.

To sum up, victims, child soldiers and their supporters and community members, expressed their satisfaction with the circles. At this time, deeply moved with emotion and pain, the audience showed empathy towards both child soldiers and victims and pleaded that child soldiers may be forgiven. The participants expressed very high levels of satisfaction after participating in peacemaking circles, with 57.8 per cent stating that they were very satisfied with the circle process, with a further 34.3 per cent being satisfied.

Vicarious justice emerged as a dimension of healing processes for some participants, whereby forgiveness and reconciliation could be asked and granted on behalf of absent parties, both victims and perpetrators. This was experienced, for example, when child soldiers asked for forgiveness on behalf of deceased child soldiers and, in some cases, those who had not yet left child soldiering.

Phase 2. Evaluating the outcome of peacemaking circles

The evaluation considered three issues:

- Participants' views about forgiving child soldiers
- Participants' views about accountability of child soldiers accused of carrying out war crimes and crimes against humanity
- A comparison of scores of participants below the age of 18 years, before and after RJPCs, regarding their intention to join armed groups.

A randomised control testing procedure was followed. An experimental group of 134 participants engaged in the peacemaking circles, while a control group of 129, with similar characteristics, did not. A comparison of attitudes before and after the former group's involvement in the circles was used to test whether this involvement seemed to result in attitudinal change. Around half of both groups were willing to forgive child soldiers before the circles and that this rose, *for both groups*, to over 90 per cent after the circles. Peacemaking circles appeared to encourage a much greater willingness to forgive, both for those who participated in them and those who did not. A similar result occurred in terms of support for prosecuting child soldiers. A little over half were in favour of prosecution before the circles and this fell, again for both groups, to around a third. What might explain such results? It appears that contamination (of a positive kind) occurred in the sample. That is, the experience of community members who participated in the circles circulated widely so that most community members were aware of the circles and developed opinions as to their effectiveness.

Finally in phase 2, the stated intention of 282 young men to join armed groups were measured before and after their involvement in peacemaking circles. Before the circles, 62 per cent expressed an intention to join and this fell to 36.5 per cent after the circles. When the sample is broken up between those aged below 18 and those aged 18 and above, it is apparent that the reduction mainly occurred among the older age group; some 45 per cent of those under 18 still intended to join armed groups. The proportion of young men still intending to join armed groups can perhaps be explained by perceptions of adventure on the one hand and the economic benefits of child soldiering on the other.

Phase 3. Training programmes in restorative justice and peacemaking circles

Training programmes were conducted with a further 1,165 respondents from the four communities, including 60 former child soldiers, 639 students and 466 adult community members. Of the last, 197 regarded themselves as direct victims of violence involving child soldiers. Of the child soldiers, a third reported having had more than one participation in child soldiering and two thirds had been students and aged below 18 years immediately prior to their participation. The reason for including such a large number of students was the hope that the training would help prevent them opting to become child soldiers, given that close to half still retained that intention.

Training was carried out in full day sessions in the four communities and participants were surveyed immediately after the final session. The training focussed on the operation of peacemaking circles, using a workshop format and role-plays and utilised material presented in Warters (2000).

Among the important findings from the post-training evaluations were the following:

- A high level of remorse for their actions on the part of child soldiers (over 80 per cent of former child soldiers)
- Almost two thirds agreed that former child soldiers needed to be accountable for their actions before being accepted back into their communities
- Three quarters of respondents agreed that this accountability should be based on restorative justice rather than conventional justice approaches

In short, there was a high regard for restorative justice and the peacemaking circle process and their capacity to lead to reconciliation, healing and the effective reintegration of former child soldiers. The respondents believe that restorative justice approaches can prevent children becoming child soldiers in the first place, as well discouraging former child soldiers from going back to soldiering.

Conclusion

This action research project involved engaging communities in discussions about the accountability of former child soldiers and the conditions under which they might be reintegrated into their communities. The findings suggest a widespread disposition to forgive, which increased greatly during the engagement and training. Alongside this very positive finding was the high proportion of under 18 year olds (almost half) who still retained intentions to join armed groups.

The concept of restorative justice and the processes of peacemaking circles are consistent with baraza philosophy and practice and helps to explain their ready acceptance. The sub-title of Pranis's (2005) book – *a new/old approach to peacemaking* – makes this point clearly. In a number of war-affected communities, including the four under study, baraza structures have been damaged and its status weakened. The use of new but similar processes will hopefully help rejuvenate its operations and thereby community cohesiveness.

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PART IV:

COMMUNITY PEACEBUILDING

Assessing the potential of participatory action research methodology to peacebuilding in Seke district, Zimbabwe

Norman Chivasa

Introduction

Participatory action research (PAR) is a type of participatory development strategy that emerged from the 1960s onwards. Its direct link with peacebuilding is still under review. This chapter describes participatory action research undertaken to develop local peace initiatives through informal peace committees. Central to informal peace committees is self-reliance, involvement and participation by individual members within the committee itself and the village members as well. In short, the social dynamics involving the creation and operation of an informal peace committee at village level uniquely embraces the basic tenets of participatory action research. Within this framework, this chapter reviews the theory and practice of PAR design and describes how the cycles of PAR were applied in a rural community before and after a Ward Peace Committee (WPC) was established. The overall objective of the study was to establish whether PAR can be an effective peacebuilding methodology at community level. In order to assess the potential of PAR to peacebuilding the researcher worked in collaboration with an advisory team of 14 members to set up a ward peace committee structured along the basic tenets of PAR methodology.

The PAR methodology

PAR is a transformed version of a family of participatory methodologies which emerged in the 1960s in Latin America. The oldest of them is the activist participatory research which was popularised by educationists who include Paulo Freire and other proponents. Its main thrust was to empower the poor, marginalised and underprivileged people so that they could be able to identify and provide solutions to problems affecting their well-being. Subsequently, in the 1970s, Participatory Research and Rural Rapid Appraisal came into the limelight emphasising that poor people should investigate their own situations, analyse and come up with sustainable solutions to their problems. Thus, PAR was born out of a family of methodologies that were aimed at empowering the poor and marginalised people to take responsibility of addressing problems affecting them (Chambers 1994: 954).

The overlapping themes within this family of participatory methodologies were: bottom-up approaches, contextualised problem-solving, participation, empowerment, and collaborative knowledge generation to improve the quality of life of the poor and marginalised (Chambers 1994: 954). Turner (2009: 233) defines the bottom-up approach "as local activities driven from grassroots, responses by indigenous communities enabled to help themselves". Karlsen (1991: 148) defines participation as learning which is characterised by action, reflection and theorising involving co-researchers. Participation takes place when ordinary people have the opportunity to think, discuss and make decisions independently. In such a scenario, ordinary people can learn, improvise new

solutions to problems and improve their well-being (Swanepoel 1992). Thus, the central themes underlying the family of methodologies are participation and empowerment of people experiencing problems with a view to generate knowledge which they can use to address problems affecting their well-being.

In PAR, the poor and marginalised are seen as having the capacity to help themselves out of their precarious conditions if an inward-looking approach is fostered. In many respects, PAR is one of the strategies that aim to empower and enhance participation of people at the grassroots to take responsibility of their own well-being. In order to empower and strengthen the participation in community building of rural people in Ward 8 of Seke, the research described in this chapter employed PAR for the design, implementation and evaluation processes.

Whyte (cited in Karlsen 1991: 147) defines PAR as:

A process in which some of the people in the community being studied actively participate with the professional researcher throughout the research process from the initial design to the formal presentation of results and discussion of the action implications.

As the above proposition suggests, PAR involves the formation of a partnership between a professional researcher and some members of the community participating in a research process. This partnership is not an event but a process involving the design, implementation and evaluation of activities with a view to produce knowledge for addressing problems affecting participating members of the community. Letts et al. (2007: 4) contend that in PAR “the researcher works in partnership with participants through-out the research process.” Thus, PAR fundamentally involves the participation of members of the community as stakeholders in a research process.

Similarly, Stiefel (2001: 272) argues that in PAR “researchers and social actors join forces in collective research and analysis.” By implication, community members participating in a PAR process become social actors generating knowledge used for addressing the social problems within their community. McKay and Marshall (2001: 47) argue that social actors using PAR as their methodology have dual roles. In the first place they should be solving the problem under investigation and secondly they should generate new knowledge out of their experiences in the research process.

As mentioned above, PAR challenges the top/bottom power balance (Barbera 2008: 143) by taking into account indigenous knowledge of the participating members of the community (van Niekerk and van Niekerk 2009: 131). In the research discussed in this chapter, members of the ward peace committee in Seke district never took a subordinate role but were involved in the design, implementation, evaluation and analysis of the results.

Although in academic discourses PAR is construed as a linear process, Kemmis and McTaggart (cited in Burns et al. 2012: 6) note that “the process might not be as neat as this spiral of self-contained cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting”. Simply put, PAR involves a number of dynamics which cannot be subjected to a linear process due to a number of factors such as different learning processes and contextual differences. Pettit (cited in Burns et al. 2012: 6) contends that learning does not occur in a linear process because individuals and groups make sense of their experiences in different ways and varied contextual environments. Thus, the important thing to know about PAR is that some people learn through dialogue, others through participation and others still through conversation. Others learn through watching a film or any other experience. On the basis of this argument, PAR cannot be seen as favouring a particular mode of learning given the different ways of preferred learning environments and modes. In the current research, the PAR stages were not always linear. However, it is important to note that the cycles were instrumental in the setting up of a WPC.

The Participatory Action Group (PAG) as co-researchers

By the time fieldwork was to begin, there were already 65 women and 35 men (including the researcher) who had been trained by the ecumenical church leaders' forum (ECLF) in Ward 8 through a three-day conflict prevention, management, resolution and transformation (CPMRT) sensitisation workshop in 2013. Prior to the setting up of the WPC in 2014, the steering committee involved the ECLF provincial and district focal persons and myself. This three person team was not formed haphazardly and the process involved a series of meetings. In consultation with the district and provincial focal person, we resolved that a purposive technique should be used to select would-be peace committee members using personal testimonies among other criteria. The planning stage ended with the write up of the criteria for would-be peace committee members in November 2014.

We considered it appropriate to set up a WPC with individuals who were trained by ECLF but not yet members of any peace committee in Ward 8. Accordingly, about six would-be peace committee participants were purposively selected. To ensure that a total of 15 members were found, we then asked some participants to provide names of other would-be peace committee members. A total of seven participants were selected using the snow-ball sampling technique. By selecting these trained participants, the district focal person and I were building on the fact that they already had some knowledge and understanding about peacebuilding but were not yet members of any peace committee. Since the district focal person and I were also would-be peace committee members we added up to 15 WPC members (henceforth, referred to as the PAG). All peace committee members became partners in the current research.

PAR in Seke district

As a methodology, PAR was also useful in Seke district in linking research with action to bring about social change. Its suitability for the research was determined by its capacity for creating or improving social practices concerning peace issues (Whyte 1991: 8). Peace involves cooperation, social networks, co-existence and trust building activities resulting in positive social relationships between individuals and groups. Apart from that, peace can only be achieved through action and PAR was suitable because it helped to connect research and action in order to improve or create a new practice relating to peace issues in Ward 8 of Seke.

Furthermore, Whyte (1991: 9) asserts that PAR is oriented towards "a hands-on set of relationships". A hands-on set of relationships entails that a group or community which is being studied teams up with the researcher in becoming co-researchers in order to produce knowledge that can be used to improve their social, economic, political or religious lives. Barbera (2008: 154) points out that: "the barriers between subject and researcher are eliminated." As described below, this happened when I formed a coalition with a 14 member team in Ward 8 between 30 September 2014 and 22 July 2015.

This coalition involved trained individuals who shared a common concern and were prepared to work towards addressing specific challenges to peace (such as poverty, hunger, food and unavailability of school fees, to mention but a few) which are affecting their local communities (Gorbich 1999: 207). The purpose of the partnership was to create knowledge through involvement of the community in the research process (Stiefel 2001: 273) and PAR created an enabling environment for the ward peace committee to create new knowledge in the area of informal LPCs. PAR thus empowered us as stakeholders in Ward 8 to collaborate in the identification of peace challenges affecting communities in Seke and in the production of knowledge to address those challenges.

Applying PAR in Seke District

Characteristically, PAR is participatory both in theory and practice (Karlsen 1991: 152; Barbera 2008: 145). Following this, we attempted to make the process of setting up a ward peace committee

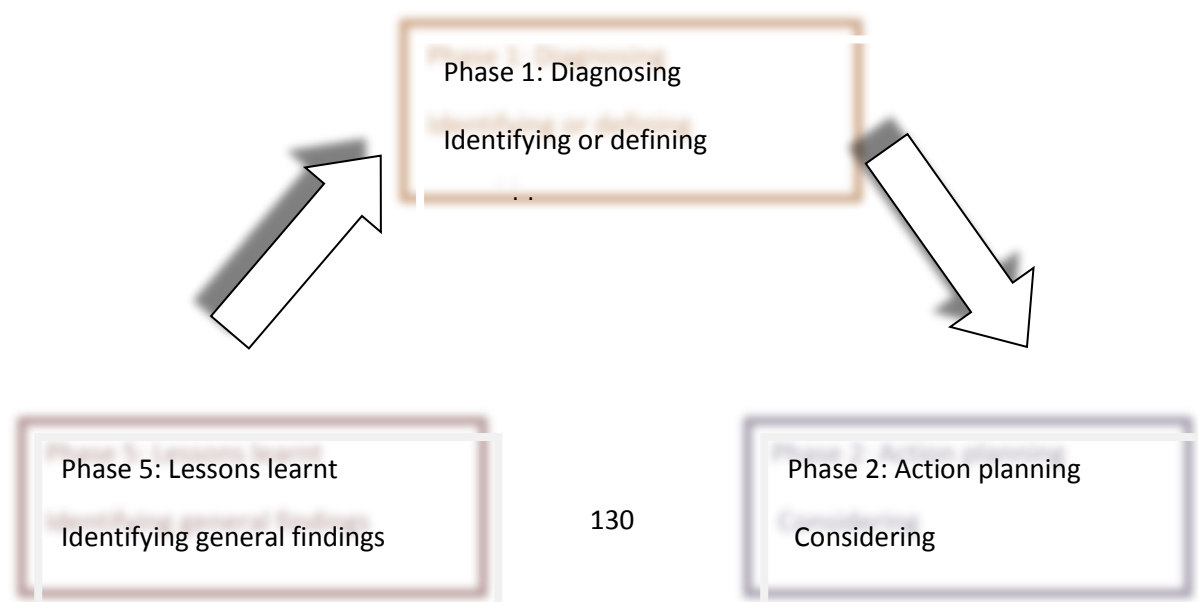
(WPC) in Ward 8 collaborative as well. In the process, the district focal person and I assigned each other duties and responsibilities. Also, because of the participative nature of the process, members of the WPC conducted a self-evaluation on 16 January 2015. The chairperson of the peace committee facilitated this evaluation and I was taking notes as well as voice recording the proceedings in order to capture data since the results of the evaluation were to be presented to the PAG in order to draw lessons.

In addition, PAR is predominantly qualitative in its approach to research (Bloor et al., 2001, p.30). It produces data based on individual people's beliefs, experiences and views on life. For that reason, the results that emerged from both, the planning meetings and the evaluation of the peace committee, are presented descriptively. Because of the qualitative nature of PAR, I was able to capture emphatic quotes, jargon, stories told by participants and ideas expressed during meetings. The PAG understood and drew lessons from the self-evaluation.

PAR is also described as reflective (Karlsen 1991: 148; van Niekerk and van Niekerk 2009: 136). This suggests that plans and decisions concerning the setting up of a WPC were not supposed to be made haphazardly but systematically. In the process leading to the formation of a WPC, decisions were thought through and at times reversed in order to come up with a well-thought-out and meaningful alternative that we all embraced. For instance, at one point we discussed the issue of inclusivity of the peace committee and that it should include both ZANU (PF) and MDC members. During our discussions with the provincial focal person on 17 October 2014, we noted that some communities especially in Mudzi district, Mashonaland east province, and members of the peace committees who were ZANU (PF) were not for the idea of having MDC members become stakeholders in the same peace committee. After considering the pros and cons at various times, we resolved that a WPC should first be established and then issues of inclusivity could be dealt with gradually as we went along. Thus, the process was reflective in that we were able to think and rethink again in order to achieve consensus as to what should be done to create knowledge on how to address peace challenges in Ward 8.

Another characteristic of PAR is that it is responsive to emerging issues (Stiefel 2001: 273; Checkland and Poulter 2006: 6). In Ward 8, I discovered that the call for a WPC was a response to polarisation that had been experienced by communities especially in the run-up to elections from 2002 to 2008 in Zimbabwe. Therefore, it became apparent that setting up a WPC was challenging as in almost every discussion the issue of polarisation was either mentioned directly or alluded to. Accordingly, the approach of engaging local communities needed to be participatory because PAR sought to empower local communities to take responsibility to address peace challenges affecting them. Thus, in Ward 8, almost every characteristic of PAR mentioned above was applied through the PAR cycle.

In the current research, the PAR cycle involved five stages: problems identification, action planning, taking action, evaluation and re-planning, shown in Figure 1 below.



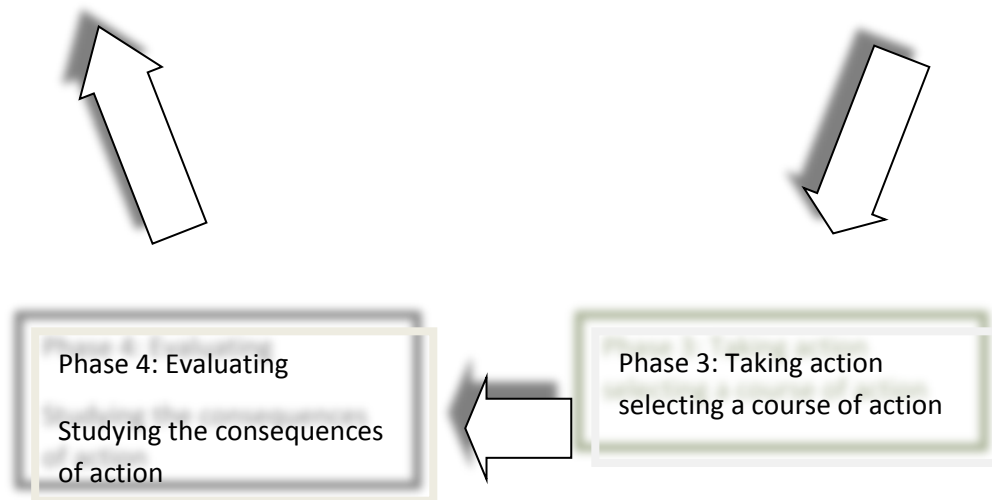


Figure 1: Participatory action research cycle

Source: (Ahmed 2009: 24)

The five stages were characterised by meetings, discussions, setting of timeframes and defining work schedules from time to time. Van Niekerk and van Niekerk (2009: 136) point out that a PAR cycle is a continuous process which however can move back and forth from time to time. However, in Ward 8, the PAR cycle translated into two cycles. The first cycle involved the setting up of a WPC which ended with the self-evaluation by the PAG (Rhodes, Malow and Jolly 2010: 174). The second cycle, which fed into the existing WPC, gave birth to five village peace committees (VPCs). Details of each stage were as follows:

Stages 1-2: Problem identification and action planning

A full picture of the situation on the ground was created and a plan to set up a WPC was put in place working with the district, provincial focal persons and myself. The problems in Ward 8 were multifaceted, involving hunger, lack of funds to pay school fees, stock theft, robbery, rape, and domestic violence, polarisation along political affiliations and disrupted livelihoods due to poor harvests in 2014 and 2015 agricultural seasons. Some of these problems emerged during the initial stages while other problems emerged after the WPC was already established. It was these peace challenges that prompted us to set up a pilot peace committee in Ward 8 in order to come up with modalities on how these problems could be addressed through a peace committee and with other stakeholders. This first stage took place between 30 September 2014 and 6 November 2014 and the criteria and composition for the would-be WPC members was developed.

Stage 3: Taking action

This stage involved putting resolutions from the planning meetings, discussions and reflections into action. It was characterised by goal-oriented actions, that is to say, plans were put into action and adjusted to suit existing circumstances. Following consultations with would-be WPC members, a WPC was put in place through a self-selection process which involved the appointment of 15 members, including myself. I was appointed secretary of the WPC. The provincial focal person gradually dropped off as we headed towards the formation of the WPC because his primary role was to provide professional advice on processes involved in the setting up of a WPC. Following the setting up of the WPC, this automatically became my advisory team (henceforth referred to as co-researchers/ participatory action group (PAG)) throughout the PAR cycle. In order to conform to the

basic tenets of PAR, the PAG played a leading role while I took a facilitation role. The PAG comprised of seven (7) men and (8) eight women.

Subsequently, formal and informal meetings and discussions were convened at intervals in the period between November 2014 and July 2015. Given that I was one of the stakeholders as the secretary of the WPC, a trust relationship was established and sustained during the period under review. As a matter of fact, this relationship has outlived the setting up of the WPC. This was facilitated because the position of secretary gave me the opportunity to discuss both formally and informally with fellow WPC members what worked and what did not work during the meetings and in other fora.

Stages 4-5: Evaluation and re-planning

The evaluation stage took place in two stages. The first involved self-evaluation by the PAG in January 2015. The chairperson of the peace committee facilitated this evaluation and I was taking notes as well as voice recording the proceedings in order to capture data since the results of the evaluation were presented to the PAG in order to learn from them. The second stage involved evaluation of the WPC initiative in July 2015. Results of the self-evaluation were analysed and reflected on. I had also kept a journal of activities as advised by van Niekerk and van Niekerk (2009: 135). This was also useful during our routine meetings and discussions, when I, as the secretary, had to retrieve some information recorded both in the minute book and my own journal of activities either as a reminder or to point out some resolutions made by the group and it assisted us in the reflection process. In fact, reflections provided stakeholders with intimate knowledge regarding dynamics surrounding the activities and sustenance of a WPC.

In addition, owing to the self-evaluation, the PAG came up with a blueprint on the concept of peacebuilding in preparation for a village tour which was to be conducted in February 2015. This blueprint was meant to serve as a framework during the village tour, which aimed at the sensitisation of 29 villages in Ward 8 to consider putting in place village peace committees (VPCs). It was at this stage that the first cycle fed into the second PAR cycle after securing buy-in from the ward assembly in February 2015.

As a result, a re-planning was done and the first cluster involving three village sensitisation tours were conducted in February 2015. By the time of writing this report, about 16 villages have been toured and five VPCs had been put in place. Of the five VPCs established, the PAG purposively sampled the first cluster involving three VPCs in order to establish a WPC and VPC asset inventory. The idea of having an asset inventory emanated from the analysis of results of the self-evaluation in January 2015 and was largely informed by the asset-based framework which states that local capacities at the disposal of the community should be mapped and be utilised to address peace challenges affecting communities.

McCall (2003: 102) points out that the process involving the identification of capacities and assets at the disposal of the community is a positive stance which demonstrate the ability of a community to meet its own needs. Laverack and Thangphet (2009: 172) emphasise that the identification of skills and abilities of individuals within a community is a positive move that can help to improve the lives of community members. Thus, the compilation of an asset inventory by the WPC should be applauded as an important milestone that fosters the capacity of the community to take responsibility of its own peace. The second and final stage of evaluation of the WPC in Ward 8 was finalised in July 2015.

PAR and peacebuilding

There are some similarities between PAR and peacebuilding. Both PAR and peacebuilding bring people together to address common problems and are relationship-oriented. Peacebuilding acknowledges that peace is no accident and therefore requires planning, commitment and the

participation of all relevant stakeholders as well as cooperative relationships and these are similarly critical components in PAR. To achieve peace, individuals and groups need to form partnerships because peace is a result of group efforts and networks between stakeholders (Maruta 2008: 7).

Additionally, peace, trust, and social justice are all values that underpin both PAR and peacebuilding. In peacebuilding, networks are a major component for peaceful communities (van Niekerk and van Niekerk 2009: 133). This explains the undeniable link between PAR and peacebuilding. On this basis, since peace is both a critical value and a means to achieve a goal in peacebuilding processes, PAR was identified as the most appropriate design. Letts et al. (2007: 4) argue that PAR “involves individuals and groups researching their own personal beings, socio-cultural settings and experiences. They reflect on their values, shared realities, collective meanings, needs and goals.” In this study, peace was one of the critical values upon which the study was anchored. As such, in order to test whether and under what conditions an informal peace committee can be an effective means of achieving peace in local communities, PAR was employed. In the process, the researcher worked with a small advisory team of 14 members to put in place a WPC in Ward 8.

The ward peace committee in Ward 8 in Seke District

By the time that fieldwork was to begin, there were already 65 women and 35 men (including the researcher) who had been trained by the ecumenical church leaders’ forum (ECLF) in Ward 8 through a three-day conflict prevention, management, resolution and transformation (CPMRT) sensitisation workshop in 2013. For purposes of this study, I will call these trained individuals social actors because they are people with whom the ECLF wants to build peace committees. We therefore considered it suitable to set up a WPC with individuals who were within the group of trained participants but not yet members of any peace committee in Ward 8. On 7 November 2014, a 15 member WPC was established using the five stages of PAR methodology, demonstrating the potential of PAR methodology for promoting peacebuilding.

The potential of PAR to promote peacebuilding: the Zimbabwean experience

From the outset PAR involves locating individuals or groups who share a common concern and are prepared to work towards the resolution of the perceived problem (Gorbich 1999: 207). Through PAR a platform for partnership between the community and me was created. Barbera (2008: 154) points out that: “the barriers between subject and researcher are eliminated.” In this study, the process of creating knowledge will not be a preserve of the researcher as is often the case in those research approaches that are not participatory in nature. Thus in ward 8 the production of knowledge was to be a shared endeavour between the community and I. The creation of knowledge was made possible by the fact that PAR is premised on the assumption that if a professional researcher and local community members form a partnership in the design, implementation and analysis some knowledge will be produced. In essence, it is the involvement of the community in the research process that gives birth to knowledge production (Stiefel 2001: 273).

In order to create knowledge with the ward 8 community, I made coalitions first with the district focal person and secondly with the provincial focal persons of Mashonaland east province. To form a coalition means that “relationships are refined and formed” (Barbera 2008: 155). This coalition was built around the objective to set up a pilot peace committee in ward 8.

In addition, since the focus of this research was to create a new practice in the area of community peacebuilding, a participatory approach was needed. Thus, PAR became the means of creating an enabling environment for trained participants in ward 8 to create new knowledge in the area of community peacebuilding.

It is important to note that in PAR community members - men and women – are enabled to work together with a professional researcher in the production of knowledge to address problems they

identify. In the context of peace building, violence is the major culprit affecting community life and cohesion. Communities are affected by different forms of violence at different levels and it is important that in PAR the troubled community members do not become passive subjects but active participants.

Similarly, peacebuilding focuses on creating and enhancing structures and values that promote cooperation between individuals and groups. This shows a clear link between peacebuilding and PAR in that both rely heavily on cooperation amongst different stakeholders to achieve desired goals. For instance, PAR is problem-solving oriented in that it allows individuals and groups to work collaboratively in order to address the identified problem. This approach is fundamental to peacebuilding which seeks to create an enabling environment for the parties to a conflict to collaboratively work out solutions that satisfy all stakeholders.

The nature of peacebuilding is to bring people together in order to cooperate to improve distressed relationships. Social relationships, which are a critical component in peacebuilding, are also a major aspect in PAR. Peacebuilding acknowledges that peace is no accident. It requires planning, commitment and concerted efforts in the context of cooperative relations. In essence, individuals and groups need relationships in order to connect them with other people in order to cooperate.

Reychler (2006: 9) argues that PAR is participatory peace action research (PPAR). This is partly because peace is a result of group efforts. Values such as peace, trust and social justice that underpin PAR are critical for this study because they relate directly to peacebuilding. Peace is both a critical value and a means in the practice of peacebuilding. Trust, which is also a critical value in peacebuilding, creates actual engagement between stakeholders in a PAR process. PAR also builds networks. In peacebuilding, networks are a major component for peaceful communities. In fact, informal networks are a major driving force for peacebuilding (van Niekerk and van Niekerk 2009: 133). These values help to build social relationships and they caution against hostility in the aftermath of a conflict. This explains the undeniable link between PAR and peacebuilding.

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Through PAR co-researchers develop an understanding of how different communities make peace within their localities. As such, PAR allows interaction dynamism and a partnership between the researcher and the group being studied. Using PAR in Ward 8, I assumed a new responsibility as a research coordinator while fellow peace committee members assumed the responsibility of research partners (Barbera 2008: 143).

Why PAR is an appropriate methodology in bringing about peace

The starting point to talk about the suitability of PAR for peacebuilding in this case is that this methodology has the propensity to prompt villagers to collectively address peace challenges affecting them. It seems clear that if villagers fail to address peace challenges affecting their well-being no one else can do it on their behalf. Because people in the villages live with conflict they need a methodology that helps to create and promote cohesion and this is the task of PAR.

For many years, villages have been organised along the concept of social cohesion which means that individuals come together to form groups because they realise that through collective efforts they

can address peace and development challenges which are primary to the realisation of their aspirations. The Shona proverbs 'One finger cannot crush a louse' or 'One man cannot encircle an anthill' attest to the practice of people organising themselves along the principles of togetherness, cooperativeness, connectivity and consensus with the objective to achieve their individual and collective peace and development aspirations.

Conflict and violence in the villages hurt people, destroy relationships and divide families and communities. Simply put, conflict and violence create a destructive cycle which brings forth antagonists, thus compromising peace due to the negative feelings and pain that accompany both conflict and violence and destroying possibilities for the villagers to come together to cope with their resulting negative feelings and hatred. PAR seems comparatively advantageous to villagers because they are already involved in indigenous conflict management and the connections between PAR and indigenous conflict management strategies seem quite natural.

PAR helps villages in their endeavours to build peace. Villages in Zimbabwe are generally home to the poorest of the poor and they provide peace services (such as food production, resolving arguments, and facilitating dialogue between antagonists, encouraging self-reliant activities) where even the government has no influence. Reaching out to the poor is a core value of PAR. Villages are extensively involved in providing peace services through their structures, leadership and resources using the principles of participation, empowerment and self-reliance which are central to PAR. Villages promote continuity at the local level and host and nurture life from birth to death. Village structures have earned themselves trust and credibility in their local contexts and most importantly they are the custodians of social norms and values even when there are difficulties. Villages and their structures do not come and go like civil organisations and some government agencies - they are there to stay. As such village structures exist to serve, nourish, sustain, empower, reprove and promote co-operation, co-existence, trust and tolerance for every member of the village even in time of conflict, need and desperation. They do not give up easily, and do not ask for a fee after addressing a conflict - because they are there to empower and support even in situations where jealousy, hatred and animosity become the order of the day. To achieve their desired values - peace, co-existence, cooperation, and development – villages and their populations require a methodology that helps to harness all the resources at their disposal. By adopting PAR into the life of the community, peacebuilding becomes part of the core business of the villages.

Conclusion

This chapter concludes that PAR is an appropriate methodology for peacebuilding in a village context in Zimbabwe because it seeks to advance grassroots participation. Participation involves negotiation, cooperation and collaborative problem-solving and decision making amongst individuals and groups. These aspects are of primary importance to peace building. Thus, PAR challenges the top to bottom design of more conventional research or development efforts in that it takes into account resources at the disposal of the local people. PAR has the potential to create or improve social practices especially in relation to peace issues.

Peace involves cooperation, social networks, co-existence and trust building activities resulting in positive social relationships amongst individuals and groups. Peace is an action word. PAR brings research and action together in order to improve or create a new practice. In peacebuilding, the creation of a new practice is crucial if peace is to be promoted and sustained. This new practice is created through a hands-on relationship between the researcher and the community being studied. A hands-on set of relationship entails that a group or community which is being studied teams up with the researcher to become co-researchers in order to produce knowledge that can be used to improve their social, economic, political or religious lives.

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CONCLUSION

Introduction

For most of my academic life, I followed the traditional path in supervising postgraduate theses and in carrying out my own research. That is, I focussed almost entirely on exploring a problem and added, at the very end, a list of recommendations for the relevant authorities to consider. I suspect I always knew that the authorities were extremely unlikely to read what I or my students had written and were even less likely to change policy as a result. I also realised that policy change is an extremely slow process. But I assumed or hoped that these contributions to knowledge would eventually contribute to shifting policy and planning in desirable ways and thus bring about change.

In recent years, the imperative that the understandings gained from researching a problem needed to be translated into action became increasingly insistent. Happily, I became aware of the potential of action research to help achieve this translation and I now insist that my postgraduate students in peacebuilding write theses based on action research.

The most obvious benefit of action research is that some peace is built immediately, albeit for small numbers of people, as students go through the process of exploring a problem, devising and implementing an intervention and evaluating its outcome. It is also possible that the micro-level outcomes typically sought in action research might spread more widely. There is in fact no reason why action research cannot be employed to bring about macro-level change; one of my current students, for example, is using it with the aim of bringing about the demilitarisation of Lesotho. Another benefit is that action research can help build the capacity of participants to plan and implement actions to bring about other desired changes in their environments. Yet another longer term benefit is that if the students subsequently take up policy and planning roles, they will be more confident that they can help bring about change, more realistic about what a plan can achieve and more aware of the support which must be provided for it to be successful.

An overview of the case studies

The eleven case studies in this book, which were carried out in five countries, mostly followed a four part process – an exploration of the research problem, the design of an intervention, its implementation and an evaluation of its outcome. Table 13.1 provides a summary of the case studies. It shows that five involved training and/or an educational programme; three focussed on healing and reconciliation; two used restorative justice approaches; and one focussed on building peace infrastructures at community level.

There was at times a degree of overlap in these categorisations. Chivasa's efforts to build peace committees in a Shona community, for example, is classified as community peacebuilding but utilised traditional conflict resolution procedures which are closely related to those of restorative justice. And Kiyala's restorative justice project also involved strengthening traditional conflict resolution structures in order to deal with former child soldiers and so could have been classified under peace infrastructures; it also had a strong training component. A common aim in all of the

case studies is that the direct participants were able to develop their capacities to think and act in ways which will build peace.

Table 13.1. Summary of the case studies

Chapter, author and topic	Category	Number of direct participants	Duration of the intervention
Basabose, Anti-corruption education in Rwanda	Training/education	Nine facilitators and 60 children in three schools	12 lessons taught over six months, 2013
Umubyeyi, Promoting non-violent parenting among refugee mothers, South Africa	Training/education	16 mothers	One 90 minute session, 2011
Pillay, Developing social entrepreneurship in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa	Training/education	Eight young social entrepreneurs	Action team formed, met over three years to develop businesses and training model, 2011-13
Maphosa, Reducing gender-based violence among Zimbabwean youth	Training/education	2 action teams 12 and 13 youth members, who planned an intervention with 43 participants	Two workshops and evaluations 2015
Adebayo, Training Nigerian journalists in conflict-sensitive reportage of elections	Training/education	40 journalists	Three training sessions over one day, 2014
Muchemwa, Building reconciliation between Ndebele and Shona young people, Zimbabwe	Healing and reconciliation	12	Six dialogue sessions over five months, 2014
Ngwenya, Healing the wounds of <i>Gukurahundi</i> violence, Zimbabwe	Healing and reconciliation	15	Six dialogue sessions and two workshops over 29 months, 2012-2014
Chirambwi, Healing trauma among youth militia, Zimbabwe	Healing and reconciliation	30 at dialogue; 40 at conference	A two day dialogue and one day conference, 2013
Moyo Using restorative justice initiatives with ex-prisoners and their families, Zimbabwe	Restorative justice	12 ex-prisoners and 10 family members	11 sessions over 12 months, 2013-2014
Kiyala Reintegrating former child soldiers in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo	Restorative justice	282 participants in peacemaking circles and 1165 in training in restorative justice practices	Five communities over seven months, 2014
Chivasa, Building peace infrastructures in rural communities, Zimbabwe	Community peacebuilding	14 members recruited to form a Ward Peace Committee, training manual developed,	Committees established and is continuing with formal and informal interventions and further training

Three points of comparison

The number of direct participants/beneficiaries

The number of direct participants in the case studies was modest and, with the exception of Kiyala's project with former child soldiers, averaged around 30. That said, the hope is that the direct participants will positively influence others. Insofar as Umubyeyi's 16 refugee mothers in South Africa practice nonviolence, their 70 children will be beneficiaries; to the extent that Adebayo's 40 journalists are able to report in conflict-sensitive ways, a far larger number of Nigerians may think and act more peacefully during elections; and the whole community will potentially benefit from the continuing operation of the Ward Peace Committee set up as a result of Chivasa's research. In Pillay's social entrepreneurial study, training 8 social entrepreneurs positively affected their families and communities: those with high unemployment rates can struggle with stability and peace.

There is often a correlation between the number of direct participants and the intensity and duration of the intervention. The training/education case studies were often 'short and sharp' efforts, sometimes of a day's duration, although Basabose's anti-corruption curriculum involved 12 lessons taught over a six month period. By contrast, Muchemwa's project to help reconcile young Shona and Ndebele people and Ngwenya's trauma healing project with those still suffering from *Gukurahundi* violence both involved six dialogue sessions with supplementary workshops over a number of months (in the latter case, two and a half years); the numbers of direct participants were 12 and 15 respectively. Less intensive methods can be used, in which case the numbers of direct participants can be greater, as illustrated by Chirambwi's trauma healing work with 30-40 former youth militia. Again, there may be a trade-off between effectiveness of an intervention and its intensity/duration/cost (and therefore the number of direct participants) and this is discussed further below.

The nature and degree of participation

A key principle of action research is that participants are not merely sources of information but have an important role to play in the various decisions involved in the action research process. In some of our case studies, this role was quite limited. There seems to be a correlation between their role in the intervention and its intensity and duration. The case studies which focussed on training and education, including Basabose's anti-corruption education in Rwanda, Umubyeyi's training of refugee mothers in South Africa, Maphosa's gender based violence prevention workshop and Adebayo's training of journalists in Nigeria, show that the researcher designed the intervention and the participants were very largely recipients of it. That is, the researcher's role was central and there was, it seems, quite limited collaboration and democratic decision-making. (The design and content of the training/education, it should be said, resulted from prior exploratory research, normally via a survey). The more intensive case studies – Muchemwa's reconciliation and Ngwenya's trauma healing projects – involved a much greater involvement by participants concerning what was to be done and how it was to be done. Pillay's social entrepreneurs had regular focus group meetings for almost three years to report on challenges and progress and to discuss ways forward.

Researchers clearly have a lot more to learn about facilitating participation. In Kayser's (2015: 10) words

Action research above all requires that we go beyond ... the role of 'expert', that we forget our certainties, targets, messages to be delivered to the population, objectives and indicators. ... Accept doubt, agree to listen and to learn. This is a small step towards constructive alliances for change ...

Decisions about the direction of an intervention can also be made by an outside advisory group. The content of Moyo's year-long interventions with ex-prisoners and their families were discussed and

largely decided upon by a support group of six people with experience of rehabilitation and work with prisoners.

The time factor in evaluating outcomes

There is a conflict inherent in action research, particularly when the research carried out for the purposes of a degree which is subject to time constraints. Action research commonly aims to change the way people think, their attitudes and their behavior but the extent to which these occur can only be known years – and sometimes decades – into the future. Typically, evaluations of action research are carried out very soon after the end of the intervention, long before its long-term outcomes can be identified. Such very preliminary evaluations may genuinely reflect the inspiration felt from participating in a training programme (as with Maphosa's high school students, who were interviewed immediately after their workshop) but may say little about longer term attitudinal or behaviour change. The longer the delay in asking participants about the effects of an intervention on their lives (Umubyeyi's young mothers and Adebayo's journalists were interviewed a month after their training), the more reliable will be the results.

The case studies which did not involve training and education usually ran over a much longer period and allowed some outcomes to be identified along the way as well as at the end. It is interesting to note that the more intensive/longer duration case studies were quite modest in their assessments of outcome. Muchemwa's assessment after six dialogue sessions over five months was that '[The engagement and working together was educative and enabled the participants *to develop some level of empathy and understanding of one another*' (emphasis added). Ngwenya reports 'a measure of healing' (Ngwenya & Harris 2015) among his survivors of violence after a two and a half year intervention. The success rate was easier to measure for the social enterprises set up by Pillay's social entrepreneurs; in fact, '... only two enterprises of the eight actually developed and survived over the three years'.

Four challenges of action research

Reviewing the case studies highlighted four challenges faced by action researchers. First, given the traditional emphasis on exploratory research with its positivist underpinnings, a proposal based on action research may well be criticised as being 'what consultants do'. Related to this is a concern that a detailed plan cannot normally be provided for action research projects because it is not clear at the start which direction the research will go; this is particularly so when the project's participants are strongly involved in planning and implementation. Proposals for action research projects often face obstruction on such grounds.

Second, there is usually a requirement to complete degrees within some minimum time. Given the necessity of careful exploration before an intervention is planned, let alone implemented, it is often not possible to complete an action research project quickly. This is one reason why students typically opt to only explore a problem, in which case the research is best regarded as an academic exercise which is unlikely to result in any change for the better. (It might be possible to short cut the whole process, provided good quality exploration research has been previously carried out, by beginning to design an intervention almost immediately). This also explains why most action research projects stop at the end of one cycle and do not go on to repeat the intervention in modified form(s).

Third, action researchers are committed to follow principles of participation, collaboration and democracy in their research and so face much more than the usual problems which confront field researchers. It is one thing to collect data from people in order to explore a problem but quite another to involve others in using this data to plan, implement and evaluate an intervention. It is a major challenge to make provision for a genuine role for the participants in shaping the project. This will inevitably be more time-consuming and may take the project down unexpected, possibly undesired pathways but action research asks researchers to be catalysts and facilitators rather than

controllers. Unless researchers make participation a goal, the wisdom and energy of the participants will lie largely untapped. This said, the potential of an outsider as a catalyst should not be undervalued. There are often instances where individuals and communities are stuck in situations and are not able or willing to make the first move to tackle it. An outsider can provide the initial impetus for movement forward and can help keep the ensuing process on track.

A fourth challenge – particularly for action researchers of the more participatory kind – is how to do action research and collect data at the same time. A research thesis requires an account of the planning, implementing and evaluation processes but more importantly, the student's analytical reflections on these. It will also very likely require data collected from conventional methods – surveys, in-depth interviews, focus groups and above all, observation – which need to be carefully carried out. Any performance indicators to be used to evaluate whether change has occurred need to be devised and initial data collected before any interventions begin. This dual task of ensuring that good data is being collected while maintaining the principles of participation and collaboration is demanding.

These challenges emphasise the value of an advisory/support group for the researcher, particularly for the more participatory projects. These can take different forms. In Ngwenya's trauma healing and Muchemwa's reconciliation projects, the participants themselves performed this role. Alternatively, but less in keeping with participation and collaboration, a support group can be made up of outsiders. Moyo's advisory group for her project with ex-prisoners met five times over the 12 months of the interventions and 'played an outstanding role towards the achievements ... of this research'.

The vision of conflict transformation

Two final points. One concerns the critical distinction between conflict management, conflict resolution and conflict transformation. Managing a conflict often involves separating the protagonists whereas efforts at resolution try to find a deal which is acceptable to the parties in conflict. However, as Jean Paul Lederach continually reminds us (e.g. 2003: 26-33), resolution may change very little in the sense that the parties may continue to hold the same attitudes of fear, anger and mistrust towards each other. Projects which involve parties from different sides of a conflict in action research, and encourage its collaborative, democratic and inclusive aspects, have potential to transform such attitudes over time.

The second is the need to remain aware of the toxic influence of the social and economic systems under which participants live. We can help to develop a culture where conflicts are resolved and, hopefully, relationships transformed and action research can be a valuable tool in this quest. But there is a level which it only rarely touches – the structurally violent systems under which individuals and communities live. Henkeman (2010) discusses this in the context of workplace conflicts between employers, who hold most of the power, and the employees, who have much less. How can conflicts be resolved let alone transformed under conditions of gross economic inequality, disempowerment and oppression. How can the reach of action research be extended to include these systems?

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