

**RESEARCH ON THE EFFICACY OF WOMEN AS STRATEGIC PARTNERS IN PEACEBUILDING
AND SOCIAL COHESION IN RURAL- BASED MINING AREAS OF WARD 1 AND 2 INSIZA
DISTRICT, MATABELELAND SOUTH**



RESEARCH REPORT

COMMISSIONED BY:

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Table of Contents

1.0 Executive Summary	1
2.0 Introduction	2
3.0 Research context.....	3
4.0 Literature Review	4
5.0 Research objectives	4
6.0 Methodology.....	5
6.1 Focus Group Discussions.....	5
Table 1. Location, number and gender of participants	5
6.2 Key Informants Interviews	5
Table 2. List of Key Informants	6
7.0 The efficacy of women as strategic partners in peacebuilding	6
7.1 Types of interventions carried out by peace committees	6
7.1.2 Stakeholders' view of the programme	8
7.1.3 The effectiveness of women as peacebuilders in wards 1 and 2.....	10
7.4 Challenges	11
7. 5 Conclusion.....	13
8. Recommendations	13
9. References	13

Abbreviations

DDC	District Development Coordinator
EWf	Emthonjeni Women's Forum
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
KII	Key Informant Interview
PCs	Peace Committees
ZRP	Zimbabwe Republic Police

1.0 Executive Summary

This research studied the efficacy of the “women as strategic partners in peacebuilding” programme, which is a response to the conflicts and violence caused by the presence of artisanal mining in the two wards. Peace committees (PCs) established by Emthonjeni Women’s Forum are the main vehicle communities are using to mitigate the violence and conflicts. It was found that these village peace committees, under the guidance of ward peace committees, which are led and composed only of women, have brought some transformation to the previously tense situations in the communities.

Women play a significant role in building peace in these wards and their leadership appears to be widely accepted. Stakeholders such as the DDC, ZRP, Ministry of Women and Youth Affairs, and the traditional leaders all indicated their satisfaction with the work of the Peace committees. Interviewees from most Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) indicated that they preferred to have their issues dealt with by the PCs and that the PCs were more effective than the police.

Peace Committees are an integral part of EWF’s BRICHS (women as strategic partners in peacebuilding) programme implemented in wards 1 and 2 of Insiza District. Their role is to identify and analyse conflicts, to establish and identify platforms for resolving such conflicts, to evaluate conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms in their communities, and establish early warning systems on possible conflicts. Wards 1 and 2 are situated in a gold rich area and like other areas with artisanal mining, are not spared the chaos, conflicts, and violence associated with the presence of unruly machete gangs who have no regard for law and order. These two wards present a set of circumstances that might be different from other mining areas in the sense that the effects of lawlessness are not just confined to the mining areas of the wards, but also permeate their lives in their homes.

With the inception of the women as strategic partners in peacebuilding programme and particularly, the resultant formation of women-led Peace Committees, noticeable positive change was reported by all research participants. Women have taken the lead to deal with many of the conflicts and violence caused by the presence of artisanal mining in wards 1 and 2. Successful interventions range from mitigating the violence at the shopping centres to resolving conflicts within families.

Peace committees have helped the communities to hold the police accountable for cases reported to them. The result has been the arresting, conviction, and sentencing of a machete gang, which was terrorising ward 2, to periods ranging between 18 and 20 years in jail. This has somewhat helped to reduce the impunity with which these gangs act and decreased violence in the area.

A qualitative approach was used for this research and involved nine FGDs, five for females and four for men. Participants were chosen purposively from the villages in the two wards and were a mixture of those involved in artisanal mining or panning, ordinary villagers, members of the peace committees, business owners, and others involved in other jobs besides mining. A total of 74 people, 44 women, and 30 men, participated in the FGDs. Twenty

KIIs were also conducted and these included village heads, ZRP, DDC officials, PC leaders, the two ward councillors, Ministry of Women's Affairs official, and one female who was assisted by a peace committee to resolve her conflict with her in-laws.

2.0 Introduction

"Women's involvement in peacebuilding is as old as their experience in violence" (Schirch & Sewak 2005: 1). The work done by women in Liberia and Kenya is just but two examples of successful peacebuilding interventions carried out by women in Africa.

In Liberia, women played a major—albeit—informal role in forcing the warring parties to negotiate for a genuine and long-lasting peace in the country. Started in 2003 by Leymah Gbowee, a Christian lady, the women's movement towards peace in Liberia soon became a force to reckon with. Gbowee was troubled by the violence in her country and the lacklustre efforts at negotiating peace by the various actors in the Liberian conflict. She gathered women in her church for prayers for peace, this soon grew to other denominations too and into a movement called the Women in Peace Network. They were soon joined by Muslim women and formed a united movement, the Women of Liberian Mass Action for Peace Campaign. With the increase of violence in April 2003, the women numbering between 2000 and 3000 decided to meet daily at the Monrovia fish market where they prayed, danced, sang, and chanted their demand; "We want peace!" No More war!" (Daisy 2008, in Ouellet 2013: 14). With no sign of the war abetting, the women instituted a ban on sex, refusing to sleep with their husbands until the war stopped. It was not long before the men soon joined their wives to pray for peace.

During the peace talks that took place in Accra, Ghana, 300 women from Liberia, Ghana and Sierra Leone surrounded the conference centre where the negotiations were taking place, to pressure the negotiators to come up with a genuine and lasting peace. During breaks the women lobbied the parties, they even lobbied the negotiators' families back home in an effort to exert more pressure on them. When the talks reached an impasse the women prevented the delegates from leaving the conference room until an agreement was reached. They even went to the extent of removing their clothes in front of the men to show their seriousness, when security tried to remove them by force. It is a great act of shaming for an older woman to strip in front of a man, especially in public.

A comprehensive peace agreement was eventually ironed out but the work of the women did not stop there. They were involved in the reconciliation processes that followed. They were requested by the UN to advise the troops on disarmament (Goyol 2019; Hayner 2007; Moron & Pitcher 2004; Ouellet 2013).

Similarly, women in Kenya have been instrumental in bringing peace to their communities. Perhaps the most prominent interventions are those in the Wajir District spearheaded by the well-known peace activist Dekha Ibrahim. After the 1992 Kenyan elections, massive violence broke out in the district with looting, home invasions, highway robberies, and general lawlessness being the order of the day. When fights broke out among women at a market, some women, mostly of Somali descent, managed to resolve the fights.

The success spurred them on to try to deal with the other conflicts in their communities. The women were able to convince the clan elders to renounce violence and work for peace. A Council of Elders for Peace was formed from the resultant efforts and this was instrumental in stopping the inter-clan raids that were common. The women also mobilised the young people to form Youth for Peace Groups, which helped to reduce violence among the youths. The women also led an initiative to dissuade militias from their violent lifestyles by working with many NGOs to offer them alternative sources of income. In order to sustain the peace, various peace infrastructures have been established in Wajir. As a result of sustained peacebuilding work spearheaded by the women, Wajir is now largely a peaceful place, where conflicts are resolved non-violently (Juma 2000).

It is against this background that this research sought to investigate the efficacy of women from Insiza as peacebuilders.

3.0 Research context

EWF is currently implementing the *women as strategic partners in peace building* project in wards 1 and 2 of Insiza District, Matabeleland South. The area is predominantly dry and susceptible to droughts as it falls under agricultural region 4. While the most suitable agricultural farming activity for the area is animal ranching, communities in Ward 1 and 2 tend to engage in subsistence farming and illegal artisanal mining.

Because of the rich gold reserves, wards 1 and 2 have an influx of outsiders flocking into the area in search of gold. The sheer numbers of artisanal miners, and the general lack of the rule of law, that characterises artisanal mining and gold panning in general, have given rise to all sorts of conflicts and violent activities in Insiza. In particular, the prevalence of violent gangsters (known as *aMabhambadzi* in Insiza) has caused untold havoc in the area. The unruly gangs use force to grab other miners' processed gold, the ore, or any claim which is suspected to have rich gold veins, they do not hesitate to maim or kill in order to access these. Furthermore, the moral decadence and breakdown of cultural norms have resulted in an increase in conflicts and dysfunctionality in families and the community.

EWF has been working with women in these two volatile wards and has trained women in peace and conflict resolution. They have established 12 peace committees in the two wards, with a total of 120 women peacebuilders. Local women in the two wards are involved in efforts to mitigate conflicts and violence that have plagued the area as a result of the increase in lawlessness and breakdown of the social fabric in the community. Peace Committees are one of the peace infrastructure being used by the women in their peace-making efforts.

This research was carried out to assess what impact women are having in the area as strategic partners in the Peacebuilding and Social Cohesion project being implemented by EWF, in wards 1 and 2 of Insiza. Is the work that the peace committees are doing making a difference in the way everyday conflicts are being addressed by both the members of the peace committees and the community at large?

4.0 Literature Review

Although women (along with children and the elderly) tend to be affected the most by violent conflicts (Chitando 2019; George & Soaki 2020; Shepherd 2020; UNSC 2000), it has also been long acknowledged that they can play a crucial role in peace processes. The push to recognise and involve women in peace negotiations and peacebuilding activities has been going on for over two decades now. The United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), affirms the “important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and peacebuilding” and the need for “their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security” (UNSC 2000). The follow-up resolution (UNSCR 2122) seeks to take the focus on gender and conflict transition further by listing methods that could be used to overcome the obstacles that obstruct women’s participation in peacebuilding (George & Soaki 2020). The resolution speaks about the importance of United Nations (UN) agencies’ “field mission visits” and “interactive meetings with local women and women’s organisations in the field” to “engage and support women’s leadership within civil society” (Shepherd 2020; UNSC 2013).

Although very few women in Zimbabwe are or have been involved in high-level peace processes (for instance, during the negotiations for the 2008 Government of National Unity out of the six negotiators from the three parties, only one was a woman), they have nevertheless actively participated in peacebuilding activities at local levels. Many civil society organisations’ programmes are underpinned by women’s participation and they have been involved in successful peace building at their local community levels in many parts of Zimbabwe. For instance, Moyo-Nyoni & Kiyala (2022) discuss the peace work done by women in Lupane District in collaboration with Grace To Heal; Chitando (2019) focuses on peacebuilding efforts by young women in Mashonaland East, while Masunungure & Mbwirire (2016) present a case study of women’s involvement in conflict resolution within the Salvation Army Church in Bindura.

However, in spite of many similar stories of success, women still face major stumbling blocks in their quest to participate in peace processes, especially in the more formal processes. Some of these challenges include; the patriarchal ideologies and values embedded in most African societies that tend to marginalise and minimise women’s contributions to important existential issues in the community; weak political will; limited awareness of UNSCR 1325, especially among rural women; lack of critical mass of women’s voices and experts in African peace and security; shortage of dialogue, collaboration, and strategic networking among women’s organisations, and economic factors, which force women to focus on trying to eke out a living rather than be long term peacebuilders (Chitando 2019; Machakanja 2016).

5.0 Research objectives

This study examined the efficacy of having women as strategic partners in peacebuilding and social cohesion in the two wards. The aim was to understand the role played by women in building peace in their areas and to evaluate the effectiveness of knowledge and skills gained from the various conflict transformation training they have received from EWF. What difference, if any, has the training of the women, and the establishment of peace committees made in mitigating gendered conflict and violence in particular, in the two wards? Are there

any notable instances where the resolution of conflicts or the alleviation of violence could be attributed to the intervention by the women?

6.0 Methodology

The study used a qualitative research approach to understand the nature of the effectiveness of women in community peacebuilding.

6.1 Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussions with women, who included peace committee members, formal and illegal miners, and ordinary housewives, were carried out. Of the six FGDs planned for only five for women were held as Ward 2 only had four villages. A further four FGDs for men were conducted. The men included miners, business owners (mostly shops) and others involved in other jobs besides mining. Some villages were combined and brought to one central venue. Men and women's FGDs were held separately to allow participants to express their opinions more freely. The same FGD participants were utilised for this study as well. A different set of questions pertaining to women's contribution to peacebuilding were posed. Table 1 shows the distribution of participants in the FGDs by sex and number per FGD per site.

Table 1. Location, number and gender of participants

Ward	Number of FGDS	Site	Participants by gender		Total Participants
			women	men	
1	3 Female	Thandanani	12	7	19
	2 Male	Zhulube (Mpumelelo village)	8	6	14
		Gangabezi	6		6
2	2 Female	Marubamba	6	10	16
	2 Male	Vusisizwe	12	7	19
Total	9		44	30	74

6.2 Key Informants Interviews

KIIs were conducted with ward councillors, peace committee leaders, ZRP, District Development Coordinator's office (formerly District Administrator) and village heads. Finding village heads to interview was a bit of a challenge because in the two wards most village heads are female, actively involved with the peace committee, and had already attended the women's interviews. There was an interview with one of the women who had been assisted by the Vusisizwe village peace committee to resolve a conflict she had with her in-laws. This was an excellent way of triangulating the many cases reported by respondents as some of the interventions the peace committees had carried out within the two wards. Key informants

were chosen for their knowledge of the area, and the work of EWF. In the same manner as the FGDs, specific questions concerning the role played by women in peacebuilding were also posed to the KIIs. Table 2 shows the list of key informants interviewed both at the district centre and the wards.

Table 2. List of Key Informants

Position	Number
Peace Committee leader	7
Councillor	2
Village Head	5
Zimbabwe Republic Police	2
Ministry of women’s affairs	1
District Development Coordinator’s office	2
Beneficiary of peace committee intervention	1
Total	20

7.0 The efficacy of women as strategic partners in peacebuilding

The ‘women as strategic partners in peacebuilding’ is one of the programmes being implanted by EWF in wards 1 and 2 of Insiza. EWF works primarily with women, advocating and campaigning for their rights. They are concerned with the mitigation of all forms of gender based violence which is prevalent and sometimes intractable, in communities with artisanal mining. A small segment of men participate in EWF activities, especially in the peace committees (PCs). Peace committees appear to be the flagship activity for this programme. Generally, each village has its own peace committee, of about 10 to 12 people, which are coordinated by a ward peace committee. The composition of the village PCs vary slightly from village to village, but generally, they include women, some men and village heads. There are some, like Gangabezi, which are made up of men only, because of the nature of the conflicts and the response to them in that area. The ward PCs are exclusively female, which means the leadership and function of the village PCs are under the curatorship of women, even for those predominantly made up of men. The PCs have been active for about two years.

7.1 Types of interventions carried out by peace committees

According to the participants, PCs generally deal with all types of violence and conflicts except for intimate partner conflicts/violence, which are dealt with by another structure created by another EWF programme, called community based counsellors. However, there have been a few cases where those boundaries have of necessity been blurred, either because the situation went beyond the two partners or the peace committee was approached to assist. The majority of the interventions noted respond directly to most of the issues discussed in the Nature of Gendered Violence and Conflict report.

Public violence

By default, all peace committees have or are dealing directly with the problems caused by the outsiders within their villages, that is when these people commit acts of violence and thefts at the shopping centres or villages. It was noted that their interventions did not extend to the mining areas that much. This is where the marauding machete gangs are, and lawlessness is at its zenith. Bottle stores and night clubs that were breaking the law by closing beyond the

stipulated times, or not closing at all have, by and large, reverted to the stipulated closing times. The one exception is Theleka in ward 2 where most of the businesses are being run by people who are not from the community, and where most of the outsiders reside because of the availability of rooms for rent behind shops (which is apparently illegal) and in the community. The peace committee at Marubamba spoke about a recent 'operation *dudula*' (eviction of those illegally renting such structures) at Theleka, but indicated that they had all returned within a short space of time. They intimated that they were now hesitant to carry out another operation for fear of being victimised by these people who seemed to act with impunity, with the support of some locals who benefit from the rentals.

Most of the peace committees had managed to reduce or to ban completely, the carrying of machetes and other weapons, including catapults, in public spaces like the shopping centres. To enforce these rules, a few of them have resorted to the use of force. The Gangabezi PC was mentioned by almost all of the FGD participants as having the most success in this area, and some longed to have the same success in their areas. This PC is composed predominantly of young men with a few women who happen to be members of the neighbourhood watch police or village heads. In Gangabezi, those who disobey the order not to carry weapons around the shopping area, are taken to a shed used for public meetings, and have corporal punishment administered to them. This has been done enough times to send a strong message beyond the village, that the rules should be taken seriously, and has reduced the number of people who wilfully disobey. Of course, from a peacebuilding perspective, this raises a dilemma about the use of violence to maintain peace, but given the unruly nature of artisanal miners, it might be understandable. On the other hand, the presence of more men than women might have possibly influenced the kind of response this PC chose to use to address their situation. At Gangabezi, it seemed as if women were happy to let the young men take the lead and were not playing much of an active role as the other PCs were doing.

To further curb the hooliganism caused by the drunk youths at night, all those under the age of 18 years are no longer allowed to be at the shops after 7 pm. The peace committees patrol the shops after this time to make sure no underage youths are loitering. Both the villagers and the business people agreed that they would not be entertained in their shops. Those young men who insult villagers, when drunk at night on their way home, have the peace committee following them home the next day to admonish them. All participants agreed that there had been a great reduction in such incidents and PCs have gained respect even among the offenders, who no longer act with impunity. Theleka is of course the one exception, once again.

Safeguarding the girl child

Several examples of young girls rescued by the actions of the PCs from the decadence of gold money were referenced by most participants. For instance, one of the respondents from the DDC's office referred to a situation at Tshazi Secondary School (ward1) where artisanal miners were in the habit of calling the school girls out of class during lessons, and the school authorities were unable to address the situation. The local PC took up the issue and it was said to have since stopped.

The female FGD at Marubamba related two incidents of 14-year-old girls whom they had worked with and assisted to regain a sense of normalcy. One had eloped, but they managed to take her back home and back to school. Another was of an orphan, best told in their words;

We had another 14-year-old orphan who, when she was reprimanded, would run away and sleep by the gravesite. Her aunts came to us [for help], we told them to let us know when she came back home. Lucky enough the girl went to stay at this other lady's store, so we went to ask her about her problem. We told her we would follow her to 'Seven to Seven' with a whip because at her age she should be at school. (Seven to Seven is a nightclub at the district centre where she apparently would go dancing). She stopped going there, as well as sleeping at the graveyard. Now she is alright, we meet her sometimes fetching water, but unfortunately, she never returned to school. But she became a normal child again. Now they can send her even to the shops. Before, they could never send her, if they sent her to the shops she would never come back with the change.

We see here again the cultural default of using corporal punishment for every disciplinary issue. However, in this case, it ended in threats only. The hope is that there were no deeper psychological causes to her behaviour and that she will not relapse into that anti-social behaviour.

Validation from assisted client

To triangulate the above cases, we were fortunate enough to find one lady who had been assisted by the Vusisizwe peace committee who was willing to share with us her own story. She freely told us her story (without revealing the details of the conflict). Her story is that she and her brother-in-law had a conflict that pitted her against all her in-laws. Her brother, mother, and sisters-in-law, had cut all communication and even though they stay just across the road from each other, they would not visit each other, even their children were affected by the conflict. The conflict was intractable enough for the clan to fail to resolve. Eventually, the peace committee intervened and was able to deal with it effectively and now relationships have been restored. The PC has continued to offer support when necessary. As we arrived an older lady was getting into the same homestead but left shortly before our discussion started, we were later informed that this was the lady's mother-in-law with whom she had been in conflict.

7.1.2 Stakeholders' view of the programme

On the whole, the programme and the organisation are well regarded in the community, and by other stakeholders, like the DDC, Ministry of Women's Affairs, and ZRP, who participate in the activities of this programme. According to an officer at the DDC, the programme has helped to bring to the surface many cases of violence some of which have been dealt with. In her opinion, even men are now confident enough to report if they are being abused by their wives, instead of just bottling it up. Since there has been another EWF programme that has dealt with similar issues before, we were not sure which one to attribute this to. At the end of the day, that question is moot anywhere since the results are attributable to the same organisation. It is also worth mentioning that there are other organisations in the area working with women and girls but these were mentioned once by the men's FGD at

Thandanani in ward 1. These were mentioned in the context of a complaint by men that they felt left behind since all organisations working in the area focus on women and girls. Officers from the ZRP acknowledged the importance and effectiveness of the work of the PCs whom they said they worked closely with. According to them, the Thandanani PC (which covers Mahole business centre, the central point of the two wards) was always the first on the scene and alerted the police of the victims of violence, whenever they referred them to the police station at Filabusi centre. They also indicated that they generally worked well even with the EWF officers also.

According to the officer from the Ministry of Women's Affairs, PCs are an important part of the peacebuilding work in wards 1 and 2. As a ministry, they rely on them to gauge the state of conflict and violence in the wards. The officer further reported that there had been a positive and tangible transformation within the wards due to the work of the peace committees. She gave an example of a situation where a PC assisted to resolve a brewing conflict between parents and their school-going children. There was once a time when the children learnt about child abuse at school, they went back to their homes and were now threatening to report their parents to the police for 'child abuse', whenever the parents tried to discipline them. It had reached a stage where parents were no longer reprimanding their children for fear of being reported, and the children felt they were free to do whatever they wanted. The PC was able to assist children and parents to find a workable balance between the two extremes. The reference was to the use of corporal punishment as a form of discipline. This is the default practice in most African homes, perhaps enlightenment on other creative forms of effective discipline is needed to create a repertoire of 'tools' parents could use with their children. Not every misdeed needs to be corrected by corporal punishment, conversely, neither should parents be compelled to do away completely with it and immediately.

The officer reported that right from the beginning the villagers participated in the formulation of the rules and principles they wanted their communities to live by. This early buy-in by the communities is perhaps one of the major contributing factors to the success and wide acceptance of the PCs. The officer also indicated that they had a good working relationship with EWF and that they were embedded in the EWF programmes since they were always present whenever EWF carried out their activities in the communities.

Men's views of women as peacebuilders

Most of the male FGD participants spoke well of the role women play in building peace in their communities. They affirmed the positive role women in the PCs were playing right across the community formations. This was best expressed by two of the male participants this way;

Before Emthonjeni came, there were a lot of conflicts and insults in the area, but with the arrival of Emthonjeni, we now have peace because of their teachings. The young people did not appreciate the work of Emthonjeni, but because of their teachings, those children who care to listen are being helped (male participant, Marubamba FGD, ward 2).

That woman (pointing to the chairlady of the ward 2 PC), was brave. She spoke to these crocodiles at the centre, these machete gangs, and it helped. Now we can walk at night freely without any fear. Her bravery helped a lot, this woman sorted out this issue for us. We were no longer walking outside once it got dark. Some of us were afraid to go with her, we just saw her and others leaving in cars going to look for these people who machete others (Male participant Thandanani FGD, ward 1).

When asked privately about this issue, the lady was non-committal and dismissed the speaker as someone not to be trusted. However, none of the men present disputed the fact. Perhaps the speaker embellished the story for good effect, but it appears the general gist of the story might be correct. However this situation played out, that it was at the instigation of the lady is probably not in doubt.

7.1.3 The effectiveness of women as peacebuilders in wards 1 and 2

The above quotes serve to illustrate that, given a chance, women have the ability to be very effective peacemakers. Women at Gangabezi attributed their ability to hold the police accountable to the effects of the programme. Speaking about how things were before the arrival of EWF concerning police action on reported cases, one lady had this to say;

The peace committee helps a lot in bringing awareness, because people were afraid to speak their minds. But they helped to enlighten them, so that they can speak about their issues frankly. They were afraid of what might happen to them if they spoke truthfully.

Another one chipped;

Yes they opened our minds indeed, now people can speak freely, [saying] "You police officers have been bribed", they no longer hold back, they tell them the truth. They no longer fear to speak even in the presence of the police. Emthonjeni must continue to teach us because they help a lot.

The women at Mpumelelo spoke of a case of a young man who had been macheted, when making a follow up, the police officers who had attended the case claimed that the docket had gone missing. They reported them to the Officer-in-charge and the police officers came back for fresh statements.

It is this sort of pressure on the police that, according to the councillor for ward 2, had resulted in the arrest and conviction of a machete gang, which had recently been sentenced to periods ranging from 18-20 years in prison. This outcome seems to have helped reduce the amount of violence and the sense of impunity in which these gangs acted. Participants also indicated that when a case is dragging on, they make follow ups with the police bosses with the help of EWF. As one of them put it, "*we go to those terrifying offices with the help of Emthonjeni*".

The strength of the intervention seems to lie in its appeal to all community formations, at least those interested in peace and order. The programme, by and large, is rooted in the community and there seems to be a high level of community ownership. While there is a ward PC which offers oversight and support, the village PCs appear to be autonomous and free to act in accordance with their specific contexts. As noted earlier, even the composition defers

slightly in some of the PCs depending on the need. The relationship with most village heads is seamless and the PCs complement the village heads' work. However, the nature of the conflicts and violence require a skill beyond what they would normally deal with in the absence of artisanal mining-inspired problems. The village heads interviewed, did not seem to be threatened by the work of the PCs as most are part of the PCs. but expressed gratitude for the backing they receive from them. They still have their usual cases coming to their courts. PCs also reported that there are cases they have referred to the village heads, and when such cases are being tried, they are there to participate in the process as well.

The fact that the communities seem to have accepted the leadership and role of women in the peacemaking process perhaps speaks to the success and integrity of the women led interventions. The men appeared at ease being led by women with no hint of any patriarchal superiority complex that has been said to be synonymous with African societies.

Female FGD participants at Thandanani mentioned the work done by citizen journalists who investigate incidents of violence and conflicts in the community which they then report to the PCs to respond to.

7.4 Challenges

Time constraints and competing responsibilities

While women in wards 1 and 2 are doing an excellent job as peacebuilders, they nevertheless face challenges and constraints that hinder their optimum effectiveness. Firstly and most importantly, women have so many responsibilities that make it difficult for them to dedicate the optimum time required to their peacebuilding initiatives. Their multiple gender roles ensure that they are responsible for the home chores and making sure their children are taken care of, some of them either are employed or have their own income-generating projects, and they also have to participate in community activities and in other NGOs' programmes as well.

Compensation for participation

The issue of an influx of NGOs in these wards seems to have created some level of competition for 'clients' and, if not managed well, might work against the good work taking place there. For starters, there is an expectation among participants of receiving per diems for every meeting they attend. This was felt keenly at Thandanani, which was our first round of interviews when it was revealed to the participants that they would not receive any form of compensation for the interviews. The chairlady of the ward PC was greatly concerned about the possibility of the participants not attending EWF activities in the future because of this. I had to apologise, explain my inability to meet their expectation, and persuade them to continue supporting the programme. The FGDs were no longer than an hour. The apologies and explanation had to be done with every interview we had, even the police half expected to be paid. Most of the groups fully understood and we did not observe similar reactions as the first two groups at Thandanani.

The practice is understandable as it is a development from the COVID-19 era, where refreshments for crowds were discouraged. This resulted in participants receiving cash in lieu of food. The competition for clients (by design or default) results from the fact that some of

the organisations pay much higher rates than EWF's US\$5, with one of them said to be paying as much as US\$20. It is therefore easy to see why the local animators would be concerned about keeping those who participate in their programme happy and avoiding losing them to the higher paying NGOs. This practical response to a pandemic appears to be creating an expectation among community members that they must be compensated for taking part in activities that are meant to benefit them. True, there is the fact that most of the participants have to leave their income generating activities to attend meetings and are losing out on production, especially during longer meetings. However, there is a danger of this becoming a culture that will defeat the whole concept of community participation.

Resource constraints

Members of the ward PCs, in particular, noted their struggles for resources to fund their activities. While they mentioned that the availability of cell phones is of great help, they nevertheless pointed out that data and airtime costs, which are now beyond their reach, were constraints to their activities as they are not able to recharge frequently. They did indicate some support from EWF but this is less than the present demand. In addition, they are often called to attend to cases in areas far from their homes, and they have to use their personal resources to get there. There is no doubt, however, that the members of the ward PCs, especially those we spoke to, enjoy what they do and are committed to it.

Insecurity and feelings of inadequacy

Members of the PCs reported that sometimes they feared approaching certain individuals for fear of reprisals. Sometimes they find ways around this, but at times it does stall peace efforts, this is usually the case when they are dealing with outsiders. For instance, the PC at Mpumelelo, which is composed of women only, said that when attending to possible dangerous incidents, they ask men to accompany them. Perhaps incorporating them permanently might be helpful for them.

Although members received training in some aspects of community leadership, conflict mapping, citizen journalism, conflict prevention, management resolution and transformation, they expressed feelings of inadequacy in some situations. This is to be expected in peacebuilding, but perhaps more focused training addressing the specific issues they struggle with might be helpful. They did mention though, that they often refer difficult cases to EWF for assistance; external resource persons (like lawyers, for instance) are also available to them. Accompaniment is an important element of training in peacebuilding. It is worth mentioning that communities are not entirely incapacitated to address their own conflicts, they have always had that agency, and sometimes what they need is encouragement to trust their abilities.

Lack of a local place of safety for abused women

This was mentioned by both DDC and ZRP. It was noted that EWF and other organisation working in the district have to refer women in need of sanctuary to other districts like Esigodini, which means the women are out of touch with the people rendering assistance to them with their cases and isolated from their support systems. The presence of such a place in the district would be seen as an indelible contribution of the programme to the local women.

7.5 Conclusion

The women as strategic partners in peacebuilding programme appears to be quite effective in wards 1 and 2. Tangible outcomes were noted in almost all the villages in which PCs are active. The DDC, ZRP, councillors, and village heads all expressed satisfaction with the work so far and desired to see the programme continue. The shortcomings observed are not catastrophic and are easy to remedy. While the outcomes and impact are noteworthy, it was evident that more time is needed to fully ground the programme for sustainability.

8. Recommendations

- Having a police post closer to the areas might improve policing.
- EWF needs to assist Ward PCs to find local means to support their activities, so that the leaders don't have to use their own resources for the programme (consider collective income-generating activities).
- EWF needs to spearhead an all stakeholder joint effort to establish a local shelter for women who currently have to be referred to other districts when they need protection. The local authority could provide a structure that could be kitted for the purpose.
- More time is needed to accompany the PCs to greater peacebuilding expertise including UNCSR 1325 and successive resolutions.
- An element of income generating projects is needed to empower women since not all can take part in gold panning (which is the only option currently available to them) because of the EPOs.

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