



NATIONAL TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE WORKING GROUP ZIMBABWE

Community Dialogue on the Mandate of the NPRC

Where: Nyanga North, Ward 3.

When: 24/09/2019.

Time: 8:30am to 2:00pm.

Introduction

On 5 January, 2018 the Government of Zimbabwe gazetted the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission Act (NPRC Act), operationalising the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC). Following the operationalization, the NPRC convened consultative meetings across the country with survivors on key issues pertinent for the NPRC to cover. The NTJWG has continuously monitored the work of the NPRC since January 2018. Following the need to develop an extensive tool for survivors to raise awareness of work of the NPRC, the NTJWG developed a trainers' and participants' manual for survivors so that they have a basic understanding and engage in the work of the NPRC.

On 30 August, 2019 the NTJWG undertook a capacity-building workshop for twenty-four survivors selected from ten provinces in Zimbabwe. Survivors were trained in sensitisation and awareness raising around the work of the NPRC which they are now expected to disseminate at community levels. This process will also feed into the NPRC monitoring and evaluation work of the NTJWG.

In this regard, the NTJWG convened a community dialogue to build the capacity of communities on the work of the NPRC. This prepared communities at ward level to be active participants and be involved in the work of the NPRC, and to contribute through the NTJWG, to influence the NPRC's interventions ensuring that they are victim-centred.

Objectives

- To enhance victims' understanding of the NPRC process and motivate communities to participate, document and put in place measures to ensure the participation of survivors in ensuring non-recurrence of past violations.
- To equip communities with tools and information for effective participation in the national peace and reconciliation processes and
- To provide survivors of past violations with relevant knowledge on the national peace and reconciliation process in order to ensure and encourage informed engagement with the NPRC.

Methodology

The NTJWG convened a meeting with survivors of politically motivated violence based in Nyanga North, Ward 3 on 24 September, 2019 bringing together 28 participants. 20 were male and 8 were female. 3 male were from the NTJWG Secretariat. This shifted our focus from the traditional survivors which the NTJWG has been working with in the past to engaging communities which have been doing TJ work in their communities who will be engaged for further initiatives in the future. The NTJWG seeks to activate survivors at Ward-level and make the entire TJ process in Zimbabwe victim-centred.

Engaging survivors at this juncture is important because the NPRC has also commenced consultative meetings, basis truth-telling and truth-seeking initiatives and it is important to disseminate the mandate of the NPRC so that survivors can effectively engage official TJ process in Zimbabwe. Survivors can even go further and present their challenges to PPCs. It is important to ensure that survivors are equipped with the necessary skills to engage the NPRC processes when they visit their areas.

NPRC processes should be victim-centric, thus survivors should be equipped with the right information and knowledge when approaching the Commission. The community dialogue created a platform for survivors to share their experiences and what they think about the official TJ processes in Zimbabwe. The dialogue allowed survivors to identify gaps, challenges, successes and recommendations for the Commission. Issues raised by survivors will also be utilized by the NTJWG to compile a holistic report for advocacy purposes.



Figure 1: Participants during the community dialogue in Nyanga.

Unpacking the NPRC's mandate

Mr. Sekai Gombe, one of the trainees on 30 August, 2019, opened the session by highlighting the conflict people went through in Nyanga. He zeroed into the political violence which engulfed Nyanga, especially between 2002 and 2008. Most, like him agreed that they also lost their property and livelihoods. Their livestock, houses, physical and mental well-being were taken away. They feel that their rights are not even respected up to date.



Figure 2: Sekai Gombe unpacking the mandate of the NPRC.

Mr. Sekai Gombe went further and unpacked the NPRC. He started by giving a brief history of the NPRC by outlining that the abbreviation stands for National Peace and Reconciliation Commission, which also articulates its focus. Mr. Gombe explained that the NPRC is one of the independent Commissions under Chapter 12 of the Constitution established by Amendment No. 20 Act of 2013. Parliament debated the NPRC Bill since 2016 up to 2017. The Bill was only adopted into law in October, 2018 and the NPRC officially started work 5 January, 2019 when the law was signed by the President and gazetted.

Mr. Gombe put emphasis on the Commission's mandate to deal with the past, promote peace, support democracy and entrench a culture of human rights. As such, the Commission is expected to be accountable and accessible to every citizen particularly those who are victims and survivors of past atrocities. He added that its main focus, as outlined under section 52 of the Constitution, is to ensure post-conflict justice, peace, healing and reconciliation.

He also briefly touched on the NPRC's responsibility to produce and publish reports capturing its annual activities so as to keep stakeholders up to date.

Mr. Gombe then listed the NPRC Commissioners, their names and the regions/provinces which they are responsible for. Of particular interest was Commissioner Patience Chiradza who oversees the Manicaland province and is also chairing the Provincial Peace Committee (PPC) for the same.

Tracking the work of the NPRC:

It is always important to breakdown the work of the NPTRC so that survivors, as stakeholders, are also aware what the NPRC has been up to since its operationalisation in January 2018. Mr. Gombe guided participants from 5 January when the NPRC was operationalised to the recent establishment of PPCs to ensure that the NPRC is accessible at provincial level.

Group work

Participants were split into 3 groups. Group 1 focused on a question entitled “If you have issues related to the NPRC, how do you approach the Commission?”



Figure 3: Participants discussing question 1.

The responses that were given by participants are that:

- Survivors can approach CSOs in Mutare and Harare to get assistance. The Secretariat distributed 28 copies of the Guide of the NPRC with addresses and contacts of NGOs which are directly or indirectly working with both the NPRC and NTJWG in national peace and reconciliation processes.
- The Secretariat also provided contacts of the Vice Chairpersons of the PPC in Manicaland, Dr.Mungure and Mrs.Chimange, who are also stakeholders of the NTJWG and recommended that they communicate with them in person or through Mr.Gombe who is also a committee member of the PPC. The Secretariat also provided the contact details of Commissioner Chiradza so that survivors convey their messages directly to the NPRC.

Group 2 focused on a questions entitled “What are the main issues affecting your community?”



Figure 4: Participants discussing question 2.

- Participants indicated that they are still being forced to remove their party regalia and are threatened with violence when they do so.
- Distribution of food aid and other social amenities along political lines.
- Intimidation on the basis of party affiliation.
- Being forced to attend party functions.
- Natural resources conflicts.

Group 3 focused on a question entitled “How can the NPRC improve in its work?”



Figure 5: Participants discussing question 3.

- The NPRC should make efforts to meet people at Ward level where survivors are concentrated and where the real issues are.
- When the NPRC establishes committees, the committees should be constituted by survivors of past atrocities who can relate and also articulate the real needs of other survivors.
- The NPRC should continuously engage all stakeholders on issues such as political violence and not wait for elections as this might be too late and exposes communities to violence and abuse.
- The NPRC should engage and raise awareness on its work, especially in rural areas and not just focus on towns and cities.
- The NPRC should produce and distribute IEC material about its work so that people can read and understand what it is mandated to do.
- The NPRC should also facilitate compensation and reparations for survivors whose properties were destroyed and pillaged during political upheavals.

Outcomes

- Enhanced understanding by survivors’ of the NPRC process and motivated communities to participate, document through measures that ensure the participation of survivors in ensuring non-recurrence of past violations.
- Equipped survivor groups with tools and skills for effective participation in the peace and reconciliation processes and
- Survivors’ informed engagement with the NPRC through information and knowledge-sharing on the national peace and reconciliation process.