



Research Article:

Application of Lederach's Conflict Transformation Theory by Zimbabwe Council of Churches in National Dialogue: An Insider Perspective

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Abstract

This paper looks at nation building, and conflict transformation processes led by the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC). It is anchored on Lederach's Conflict Transformation (CT) Theory. The paper examines the application of Lederach's theory by the ZCC in its national dialogue (ND) process. Methodologically, the role of ZCC's Local Ecumenical Fellowships (LEFs), the National Convergence Platform (NCP) and the effectiveness of the engagement of political actors by the Church are analysed. An insider perspective is applied based on direct involvement in the work of the ZCC. They conclude that to a great extent, ZCC peacebuilding model is informed by Lederach's theory. The model's strengths and limitations are noted. Its strength in relation to the ZCC is the emphasis on the grassroots where the Church is well represented on the ground while its major weakness is seemingly monopolistic tendency. The ZCC model can be improved through addressing the noted limitations.

Keywords: church, conflict, national dialogues, Zimbabwe Council of Churches, Zimbabwe

Introduction

At independence in 1980, Zimbabwe experienced a sense of unity, social cohesion, and a shared vision as the citizens worked together towards nation building and development (ZHOCD, 2021). This changed over the past forty-one years with serious challenges emerging. The differences between the main political parties, Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) government led by Robert Mugabe and the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) under Joshua Nkomo, that had brought independence, led to civil war between 1982 and 1987. The emergence of a vibrant opposition political party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) under Morgan Tsvangirai in the late 1990s, also motivated the ruling party to adopt institutionalised political violence that characterised all the subsequent elections in

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Zimbabwe from 2000. The violent land reform process of the early 2000s, further fragmented the society along racial grounds as the whites' lost farms to the indigenous people leading to strained relations with the Western powers. Meanwhile, the economy that had started promisingly at independence, stagnated as a result of years of mismanagement by the government.

This paper engages in a critical examination of the Church's application of John Paul Lederach's CT theory in its ND project. The authors, adopt the definition of ND offered by Blunck et al. (2017:21) in Haider (2019) that:

National dialogues are: "nationally owned political processes aimed at generating consensus among a broad range of national stakeholders in times of deep political crisis, in post-war situations or during far-reaching political transitions" (Blunck et al., 2017, 21). They are typically accompanied by broader societal consultations, involving all sectors of society.

The authors examine whether Lederach's theory has been employed in the Church-led ND processes, if so, to what extent the ZCC has modified it. Paffenholz (2013) examines the historical development of Lederach's theory, and how it has become a reference point for peace practitioners. Dube and Makwerere (2012) also examine the peace infrastructure debates in Zimbabwe focusing on local peace committees (LPCs). The current paper contributes towards a systematic examination of the Church's utilisation of the Lederach's theory on Zimbabwe's ND process. Key questions for the paper are: to what extent has Lederach's CT theory been applied in the ZCC-led ND process? What have been the major differences or similarities between the ZCC peace building approach and Lederach's theory? What are the strengths and limitations of the ZCC approaches?

The ZCC is an ecumenical body founded in 1964 and is made up of a membership of thirty mainline member churches. It is the current Secretariat of the Zimbabwe Heads of Christian Denominations (ZHOCD) platform made up of the ZCC, the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference, the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe, and the Union of the Development of Apostolic Churches in Zimbabwe Africa. The ZCC is currently leading the nation in what it calls an inclusive, comprehensive, and transformative ND.

Current context

The country's economy has remained exclusive despite the availability of natural and human resources. Zimbabwe has been battling to respond to recurring humanitarian challenges and continued social fragmentation (ZHOCD, 2021). Past injustices have not been addressed particularly the Gukurahundi (this is a Shona term for the first rains that cleanse all the dirt; and in this context it is used to refer to ethnic cleansing or genocide see Gusha, 2019:8) atrocities that left over 20 000 people dead in the Midlands and Matabeleland provinces in the early 1980s (Gusha, 2021). The current administration of President Emmerson Mnangagwa has engaged traditional Chiefs in Matabeleland region on the matter. The ZCC has also produced a set of ten "principles for comprehensive engagement on Gukurahundi" (ZCC, 2018).



National healing and reconciliation processes have been very slow despite the establishment of the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC) (Zimbabwe Constitution). The NPRC has been accused by civic organisations as being captured by the ruling party; hence, it has lost its supposed constitutional independence (ZHOCD, 2021). Internationally, Zimbabwe has remained isolated since 2001 through targeted restrictive measures.

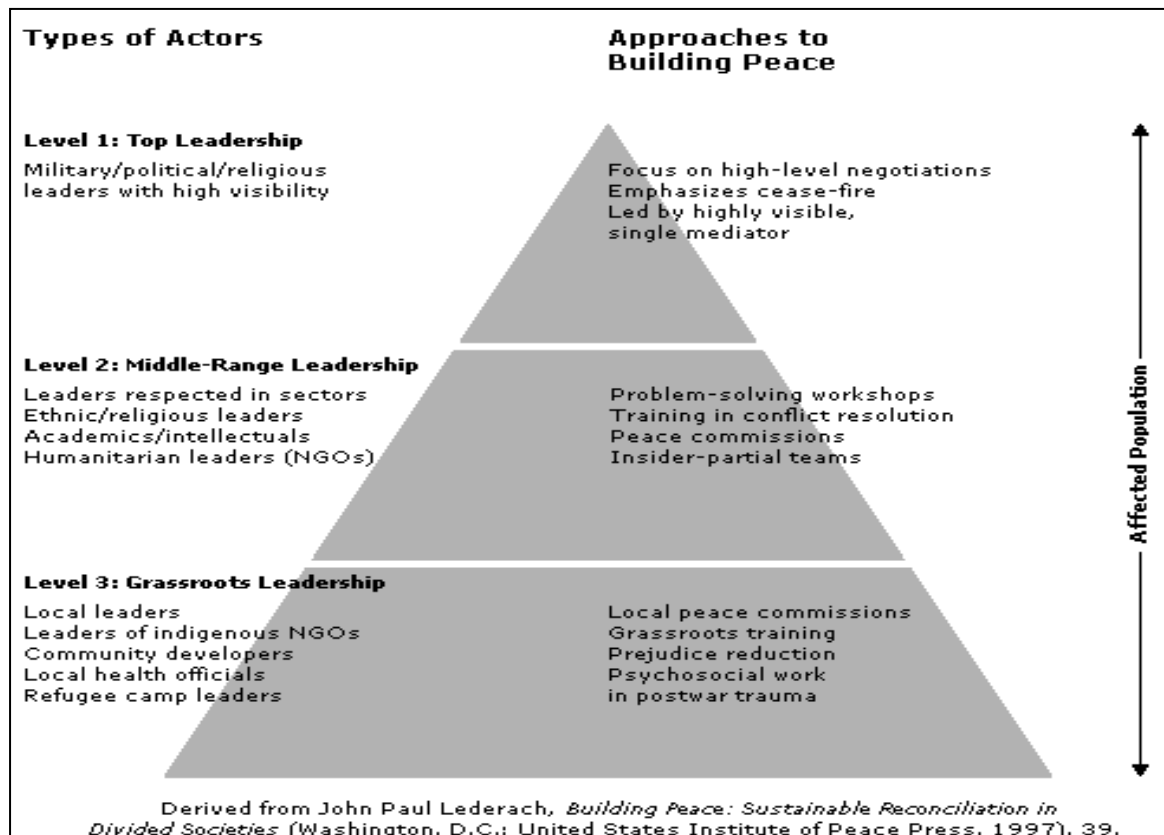
Conceptual framework

Zimbabwe's challenge is complicated, deep rooted, prolonged and politically violent and has been described as fragile or as "protracted social conflict" (Azar, 1990). The situation is a 'politically motivated intra-conflict' one requiring urgent solution (Machakanja, 2010: iv). Citing Lederach and Appleby (2010), Paffenholz (2013:3) defines peacebuilding as a:

Long term multi-track transformative contribution to social change, helping to create a just and sustainable peace beyond the narrow definition of a post-conflict period.

Theories of peacebuilding were influenced by the fact that conflicts are normal social developments. Lederach influenced the idea of localising peacebuilding efforts instead of focusing on international and external intervention. Paffenholz (2013), argues that two key factors influenced the shift from international to local focus on peacebuilding that is the liberal peace theory that ensured international support to civil society (Campbell et al., 2011). Lederach developed the CT theory in the context of the conclusion of the Cold War in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Paffenholz, 2013). The shift towards local efforts was also influenced by the realisation that internationally led conflict management initiatives had not yielded sustainable results evidenced by wars in Angola, Rwanda, and Yugoslavia in the 1990s. Meanwhile, the 'long process of locally owned, bottom-up consultations,' in the northern parts of Somalia where Lederach was directly involved led to fruitful reconciliation and peacebuilding (Paffenholz, 2013). The Somaliland experience influenced Lederach's view on peacebuilding. He concluded that locally driven, systematic, and long-term initiatives are more sustainable compared to externally influenced peacebuilding processes. For him, reconciliation should be nurtured for sustainable peace. Thus, there is need to build strong local peace infrastructures to guarantee reconciliation in a society for relationship building. Figure 1 summarises Lederach's peacebuilding approach.

Figure 1: Lederach’s Approaches to Peace Building



At the centre of Lederach’s theory is the role of middle-level leadership where he focuses on ‘middle-out’ approach which led to the division of a society into three levels (tracks) that are Track 1, 2 and 3. Top leadership include the military, political and religious leaders who are highly visible. The middle range leadership include ethnic, religious, academic, and humanitarian sectors while track 3 is the grassroots leadership. Lederach argues that Track 2 holds the greatest potential and opportunity for the development of a strong and sustainable peace infrastructure. The middle-range leadership is a source of immediate and practical action (Paffenholz, 2013). Reconciliation and subsequent long-term transformation of a society is hinged on the strength of the middle-range leadership.

It can be argued that the role of middle-range leadership has been exaggerated at the expense of the other two levels. Focus on Track 2 appears to be contradicting Lederach’s shift towards the local as the civil society in particular, will receive support from the external players thereby allowing their agenda to be compromised. Lederach did not give much attention to the Track 1 players, yet this is where formal processes are acted. Formal processes should be valued as they guarantee implementation, monitoring and evaluation of peacebuilding outcomes. The authors chose Lederach’s model for this paper in order to understand its strengths and weaknesses when applied in a non-post war situation.



Methodology

The Church-led ND project is examined through focusing on the role of ZCC's Local Ecumenical Fellowships (LEFs), National Convergence Platform (NCP) framework, and engagement of political actors by the Church. The LEFs (youths, men, women, pastors) are basic organising structures at local level (ZCC, 2020). The LPCs are peace sub-structures of the LEFs which are trained in peacebuilding for engagement on peace building at local level.

The issuance of the Sabbath Call by the ZHOCD in 2019 sought to invite the whole nation towards finding a lasting and comprehensive solution to Zimbabwe's problems (Sabbath Call, 2019). Civil society and Church leaders established the NCP. The NCP is a space for deliberating ways to collectively contribute towards finding a lasting solution to the national crisis through national dialogue processes (Mtata, 2019). Key NCP structures, General Council, Portfolio Committees, and *ad hoc* thematic committees were established. Between 2019 and 2021, twenty bilateral and multi-party meetings with political actors were held within the NPC framework being led by the ZCC.

The authors were directly involved in the conceptualisation and implementation of the ZCC processes, hence in this paper, they provide an insider's perspective informed by the participant observation approach used. They reviewed key documents such as the LEF Guideline Document; ZHOCD Consensus Proposal; ZHOCD Sabbath Call; Zimbabwe We Want Discussion Document; NCP Constitution; ZCC Principles of Engagement on Gukurahundi; ZCC Program Reports; and some historical materials as well as academic literature on Lederach's theory. An analysis of the work of the LPCs in three provincial WhatsApp platforms (Manicaland, Masvingo and Harare) that are directly administered by the ZCC Secretariat was done for a whole month of June 2021 to have an empirical appreciation of their roles in ND. Key agenda issues were consolidated for this article as part of the ZCC ongoing ND processes and were categorised according to emerging themes which confirmed ZCC's conceptualisation of the Zimbabwean challenges.

Five NCP General Council and twelve committee meetings were convened, and the authors tracked the key issues discussed, the connections and disconnections manifesting among the members and resolutions made. A similar approach was applied to the engagement with political parties, which were organised and attended by the authors as they accompanied ZCC leadership. Data from the formal meetings with political parties were analysed. A trend analysis of the emerging issues from each political party informed this paper. Generic questions included what the individual parties thought about the Church-led ND in terms of the respective roles of political actors and the nature of the anticipated outcome as well as what they regarded as the key challenges for Zimbabwe. In total, one of the authors convened and attended fifteen bilateral and two multi-party meetings that included the ruling and opposition political parties between 2019 and 2021. At first the political parties did not trust the Church, but this changed along the way.



The ideal nation building process

The problems in Zimbabwe are complex manifesting in a divided and fragmented society. Thus, an ideal dialogue process is one that can be built through a bottom-up approach for inclusivity and comprehensiveness. Stigant and Murray (2015) present key principles of a ND as inclusion; transparency and public participation; led by a credible convener; agenda that addresses root causes of the conflict; clear mandate and appropriate tailored structure, rules, and procedures as well as an agreed mechanism for implementation of outcomes. The ensuing section examines the previous peace building initiative attempts in Zimbabwe.

Second chimurenga, the Lancaster House Conference and the birth of Zimbabwe

The Lancaster House Conference (1979) is a landmark process in Zimbabwe which was held to discuss the independence, the constitution, and subsequent elections in that country (Lancaster Report, 1979). It was attended by members of the Patriotic Front led by Mugabe and Nkomo, representatives of the Rhodesian government led by Ian Smith and the British Government. The process was exclusive and narrow targeted in nature. Some of its clauses such as the 'willing buyer, willing seller', and limited land transfers later led to politically and economically motivated violence (Human Rights Watch, 2001). The war veterans invaded the land in the early 2000s forcing the government to adopt a rapid but violent land programme. The emergence of a strong opposition political party, the MDC, and the call for a new constitution, further fuelled the violence that characterised the nation as the ruling party aimed at elbowing out the new competitors (Human Rights Watch, 2001). Thus, the Lancaster House dialogue nurtured some fragility in the Zimbabwean society thereby failing to produce sustainable peace. Gusha (2019:1) argues that 'the vicious cycle of violence that was inherited from the colonial legacy continued.' A few years later, the independence euphoria evaporated, only to be replaced by violent conflict (Kulang and Ogbonna, 2018), firstly in early to middle 1980s, and during subsequent electoral periods as well as land reform implementation.

Gukurahundi and the Unity Accord of 1987

Approximately, two years after independence, there was a political-tribal rift between Mugabe and Nkomo leading to a civil war from 1982-1987 pitting ZANU government and the ZAPU (Mashingaidze, 2005). According to Gusha (2019:1), 'approximately 20 000 people died in this state-sanctioned violence.' The Catholic Commission on Justice and Peace (CCJP) confirmed the figure in its research report of 1997, on the disturbances. The war ended in 1987 after dialogues and signing of the Unity Accord on December 22 in 1987 leading to the formation of ZANU PF. The events from 1980 to 1987 show that there was never prolonged peace at all (Gusha, 2019:7). Mugabe and Nkomo continued to accuse each other of sabotaging the country and this culminated in the demotion of the latter from being Minister of Home Affairs and subsequent dismissal of all ZAPU officials from the Cabinet being accused of trying to destabilise the country.



The Unity Accord dialogue process was elitist as it left out all other players such as the traditional leadership and civic organisations. The Church represented by Canaan Sodindo Banana, intervened but inclusivity was never achieved. The outcome was not comprehensive enough to prevent future challenges. The Centre for Peace Initiatives in Africa (2005), cited in Dube and Makwerere (2012) argues that the accord was elitist and did not address the effects of the Gukurahundi particularly at grassroots level. The unresolved issues of the period remain at the centre of the current societal fragmentation, thirty-four years after the signing of the Accord.

The MDC, political violence and the Global Political Agreement of 2008

Between 1992 and 1999, the economic situation deteriorated due to the official adoption of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programmes and mismanagement by the government (Dansereau and Zamponi, 2005). This led to protests and resistance by a strong labour movement under the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions. This partly explains the formation of the MDC in 1999, a party supported by the Church, civil society, and students (Dansereau, 2005). As noted earlier, in 2000, a controversial land reform programme was adopted in which white commercial farmers were forcefully removed from agricultural land leading to international resistance and imposition of targeted sanctions on the country.

The MDC's Tsvangirai went on to win the first round of the 2008 presidential elections but failed to reach the fifty plus one percent constitutional requirement for one to become a President. The ZANU PF devised ways to cling to power through violence instituted by the military and war veterans, resulting in a political deadlock. Thabo Mbeki, the then President of South Africa had to mediate on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in a process which led to the Global Political Agreement (GPA) which gave birth to the Government of National Unity (GNU) which lasted from 2009 to 2013. Mugabe became the President; Tsvangirai, the Prime Minister and Arthur Mutambara of the smaller MDC faction, the Deputy Prime Minister (GPA, 2008).

Mapuya (2010: 247) argues that 'in Zimbabwe, just like in Kenya, the prospects of a peaceful resolution to the flawed electoral process would not have been any better than through the GNU formation.' This confirms the main purpose of the GPA as to resolve a political matter without being sensitive to other connected problems hence its non-comprehensiveness. The GNU oversaw the crafting of the new constitution led by the Constitution Parliamentary Committee (COPAC), which was a Constitution Select Committee of the Parliament mandated with the drawing up a new constitution for Zimbabwe by the Government of National Unity between 2009 and 2013.

Dube and Makwerere (2012:297) note the other achievement of the GPA arrangement as the creation of the Organ on National Healing, Reconciliation, and Integration (ONHRI), which 'provided a window of opportunity for the creation of a comprehensive peace infrastructure although it would appear the organ has remained purely political in its approach'. It became the foundation for the subsequent establishment of the NPRC. However, the GPA also remained an elitist arrangement, which involved top political leaders without the involvement of the grassroots.

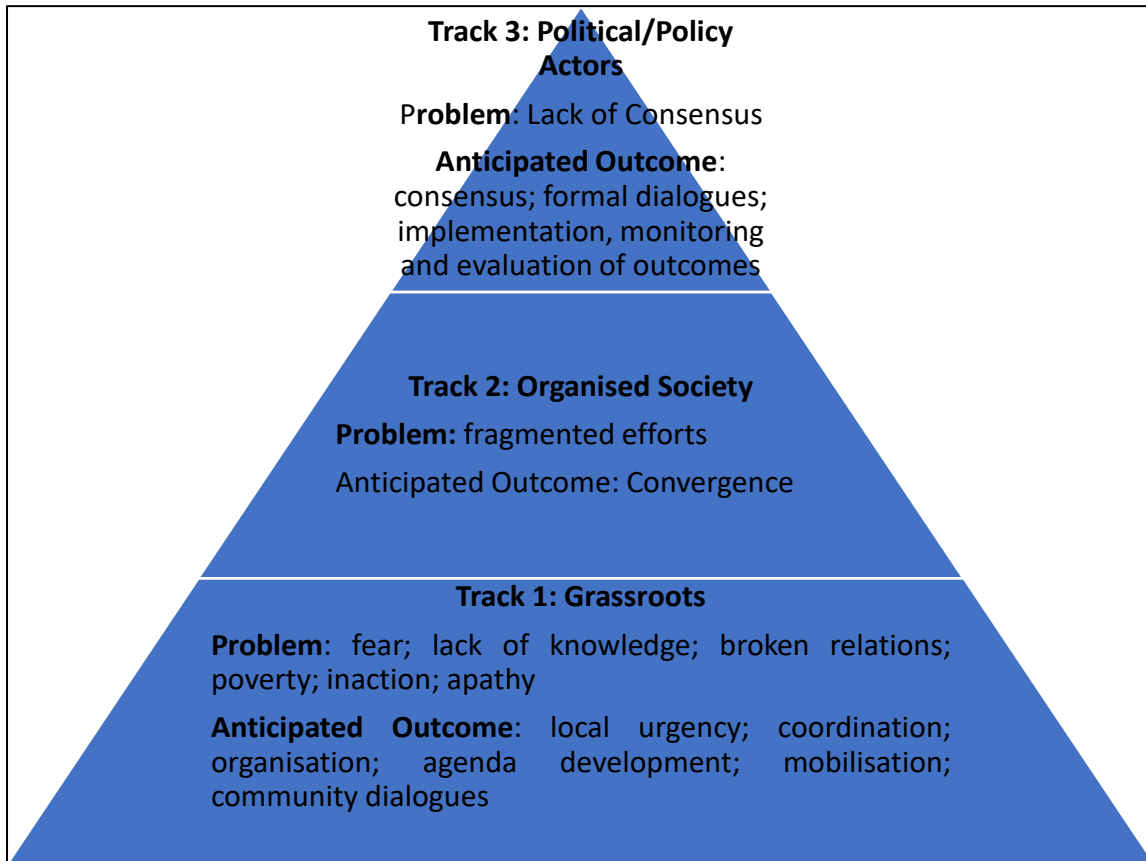


In the 1990s, the ZCC had advocated for a home-grown constitution through the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA), in what was a ZCC programme but the NCA had gone on to campaign for a rejection of the constitution in 2020. Through the ZHOC, it also contributed to the drafting and dissemination of the Zimbabwe We Want Discussion Document in the mid-2000s (ZHOCD, 2006) which spelt out comprehensive nation building pillars for the country. The ZCC has also continued to participate in electoral processes through observing all the local and national elections. In 2018, it initiated a process of national healing and reconciliation through deliberate engagement of traditional leaders in all provinces culminating in the development of the 'principles for comprehensive engagement on Gukurahundi' as indicated earlier on. Thus, the ZCC peace building model discussed in the next section was directly informed by earlier Church efforts on the subject matter as it was attempting at responding to national challenges.

The ZCC peacebuilding model

The ZCC peace building model is infused in the broader ND process. It holds that ND should cultivate sustainable peace that further promotes a conducive environment for resolution of the deep-seated national challenges. The approach has been described as 'transformative, inclusive, broad-based and comprehensive' hinged on an 'Engagement Triangle', (shown in Figure 2 which highlights a language that was adopted in 2019 and popularised at all ZCC meetings). This approach underlied a process aimed at influencing a change of mind by citizens towards peace building. The ZCC adopted Lederach's conceptualisation that divided the society into three tracks as elaborated below.

Figure 2: ZCC Engagement Triangle



Source: ZCC Meetings attended by the Authors

Track 1: Grassroots Actors

The lower part of the triangle which is broad has been termed grassroots or community level dialogues. Where Lederach talks of leadership, ZCC uses dialogues. The ZCC describes the challenges that characterise a society in conflict at that level as fear, lack of knowledge, disorganisation, inaction, and erosion of local urgency. Thus, there is need to reactivate the base through mobilisation, coordination, and organisation for effective local participation. Local agendas are set, and they inform formal processes taking place in Track 3 via Track 2. The LPCs are visible to influence peace building. Community level dialogues are convened. While ZCC talks of LPCs, Lederach refers to Local Peace Commissions, but these are almost the same actors at this level.

Lederach gives room to psychosocial (PSS) work and the ZCC has also adopted the same through the establishment of a multi-disciplinary expert facility (MDEF). The facility is made up of a team of professionals (legal, psychologists, sociologists, topologists and medical experts) assembled to address emerging psychosocial needs of the public caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The facility was added to the model framework in the context of COVID-19 as a brainchild of a ZCC Social Worker, Ronald Nare. Lederach focuses on reconciliation as the key element of a peace building infrastructure hence his inclusion of PSS work in his model. This will address the psychological challenges that emerge in a conflict situation.



Furthermore, because, Lederach was influenced directly by war situations, he thus, gives space for refugee camp leaders in his model. Since Zimbabwe is not in a war situation, these particular aspects, may not seem to fit well in the ZCC model. However, in 2020, ZCC made inroads in implementing peace initiatives in Tongogara Refugee Camp (TRC). The TRC is located in Chipinge, Manicaland Province and is currently home to 15 049 registered persons of concern from different African countries. Through the LPCs, the ZCC managed to implement what it termed “sporting for peace” activities which included soccer, netball and chess on top of other peace building initiatives such as training of paralegals and peace practitioners. The activities have allowed the ZCC model to fit well in the Lederach’s Track 3 where capacity building targeted at the grassroots is emphasised.

Track 2: Organised Society

Lederach regards the middle-range leadership as the cornerstone for sustainable peace infrastructure. The ZCC calls this level Organised Society as generally made up of civil society, academia, research institutions, Independent Constitutional Commissions, Traditional Leadership and Church Organisations. There are no major differences from Lederach’s characterisation of the track in terms of contents. For Lederach, problem-solving process reinforces capacity building on conflict resolution. He places Peace Commissions on Track 2 although he does not use the pre-fix ‘Local’ as he did on Track 3 while ZCC includes institutions such as the NPRC in this track.

The ZCC model does not specifically include ethnic leadership, but it acknowledges the role of traditional leaders in peace building processes. This explains its ongoing Church-Chiefs engagement initiative that saw the convening of five Provincial Church-Chiefs Summits in Matabeleland South and North: Masvingo, Midlands and Manicaland provinces between 2018 and 2021. The engagement has been focused on the resolution of past injustices and threats to peace building in general. The organised society is characterised by players with different and often competing interests with no convergence on understanding the challenge and solution.

The formation of the NCP fulfils the roles that Lederach proposes in Track 2. Through the work of the thematic committees particularly the national healing and reconciliation committee, ZCC approach directly utilises the Lederach theory but without presenting it as the core track. The agenda that would have been developed in Track 1, is packaged at Track 2. According to ZCC conceptualisation, the organised society, ‘represents’ various sections of the society including minority groups (women, people living with disabilities, youths and others).

The NCP has not been effective and visible beyond its launch. While its constitution spells out the roles and responsibilities expected of the various committees, these have not been visible due to some administrative issues such as failure to resolve the appointment of an independent General Secretary. The ZCC is the current Secretariat of the platform, where its General Secretary is also serving in that portfolio at the NCP level. Some NCP members hold that the platform should be led by an independent administrator. This administrative debate has slowed down the work of the NCP, at least at national level. It is not clear if



Lederach ever thought of such possible administrative challenges in his conceptualisation of Track 2. Selfish and individual interests of some organised society actors certainly threaten the significance attached to this track by Lederach.

Track 3: Policy/Political Actors Level

Track 3 (for Lederach it is Track 1) are political parties, parliamentarians, the Cabinet and the diplomatic community. For Lederach, the military is given prominence while in ZCC, at least in practice, the army has not been given much attention in the ND processes. However, at an *ad hoc* level, engagement of the military (the Joint Operations Command made up of the police, military and state security at provincial and national level) has been happening at provincial level. There has been some general outcry that without formally and publicly engaging the military in the ND processes, the Church is poised for failure. Lederach gave prominence to the military as his situation was mainly influenced by an armed conflict. While there is no continuous armed conflict in Zimbabwe, the role of the military has remained at the centre of all civilian work, in both government and outside. Deliberate engagement of political parties has continued while meetings with the military remained *ad hoc*.

Lederach argues that meetings at this level are held with highly visible leaders. The concept of visibility was not adequately defined by Lederach. It is still not clear whether he was referring to the visibility of players involved, or the activities fulfilled. In the case of ZCC, engagement meetings held are normally not publicly visible. They are high-level closed-door meetings hence there has not been adequate documentation of their impact on ND. The secrecy of some of the meetings has further closed out the public from contributing to the ND process thereby compromising the inclusivity principle.

The interest of political actors are mainly on power retention and expansion. Thus, political parties in particular influence decisions in parliament, in Cabinet and also what goes out through embassies. The agenda chained is politically aligned to individual political players. Yet, this is the stage where formal processes take place. For inclusivity, an agenda created in Track 1, packaged in Track 2 should be implemented formally in Track 3.

The effectiveness of the political parties' engagement process has been threatened by the existence of the Political Actors Dialogue Platform (POLAD). This is a government driven platform where the opposition political parties that participated in the 2018 elections meet. However, the MDC-Alliance, a key political player has not embraced the POLAD idea and ZCC has also not formally engaged this platform.

Key findings

Clearly, ZCC's model was directly informed by the Lederach theory. The section below summarises the key findings made by the authors.

ZCC strength lies in its national spread and local presence

While Lederach places much significance on Track 2, ZCC targets Track 1 as the most important level. Based on Church spread and influence, Track 1 becomes the foundation for peace initiative on peace building. The ZCC LEFs are located across the country with



specialised sub-structures such as LPCs occupying a strategic position in peace building. At the time of writing, ZCC has LEF structures in all the fifty-nine districts. In more than twenty districts, the ZCC has LEF structures at local level which feed into the district leadership.

The existence of LEF structures in all the districts informs ZCC's approach where the grassroots level becomes key as compared to Lederach's argument. The idea of strengthening local coordination, organisation and mobilisation is strong as it guarantees sustainability and inclusivity of peacebuilding initiatives. Local urgency will motivate the organised society and policy actors in ND processes.

The authors have noted that the work of LPCs in ZCC peace building has informed most of the national interventions that the Church has done. The LPCs are currently active in Harare South, Epworth, in all the districts in Masvingo, Chimanimani, Chipinge and Mutare. These have clearly defined peace building roles, which ensure that agendas are generated at local level for execution at other levels of society. This aspect had lacked in the previous dialogue processes.

Organised society leadership dynamics has slowed ND

There appears to be no major difference between Lederach's theory and the ZCC model in terms of the composition of Track 2. However, ZCC does not put much focus onto the organised society unlike Lederach. The NCP initiative has proved that players in Track 2 are also driven by competition, which slows down ND process. While the platform had managed to bring together key players who had the potential to influence ND outcomes that are comprehensive and inclusive, the NCP has so far failed to do that. The multi-sectoral nature of the NCP was thus a missed opportunity for peace building in Zimbabwe. Citing Dress (2005), Dube and Makwerere (2012) indicate that there is general agreement among peace practitioners and academics for a multi-sectoral peace building approach.

Failure by ZCC to utilise emerging and existing 'religious' opportunities

The ZCC has failed to combine efforts with other emerging platforms such as the Zimbabwe Inter-denominational Indigenous Council of Churches (ZIICC). The ZIICC was founded in 2019 in direct response to the formulation of the NCP. It is made up of some indigenous Churches, both Pentecostal and a white garment church's, who are not part of the ZHOCD. While ZIICC has remained a compromised group of Church leaders, the ZCC through the ZHOCD should have quickened and concretised efforts for an inclusive Church ND process.

In addition, there are strong religious leaders in Zimbabwe who have deep political links with the current regime. On the other hand, they are strong religious players who have links with the political leaders of the opposition parties. The ZCC has not been effectively engaging with these key religious figures who can play a critical role in creating access to political players. These include religious leaders such as Nehemiah Mutendi of the Zion Christian Church who is alleged to be politically linked to President Mnangagwa. High-level closed-door meetings held with such leaders have not been effective as they lack public endorsement. Lederach points out that high level processes in his Track 1 should be visible, yet current efforts by ZCC have been fulfilled outside public scrutiny. In a bid to have



successful dialogues, it is important for the Church to make deliberate efforts to connect to religious leaders who are clearly involved in the country's politics in a more visible manner.

Non-responsive political parties to Church-led process

On Track 3 which is the top leadership in politics and policy making under the ZCC model, the Church has failed to identify its niche to influence this group of people. Whilst significant efforts have been made to engage the political leaders on both sides of the divide, bilaterally or even in using silent diplomacy, the political leaders have not been positively responding to the call for dialogue led by the Church. Instead, the government went on to create its own dialogue platform (POLAD) which, however, has been criticised as a ploy by the ruling party to co-opt opposition parties. At times, the effort by the Church is identified as moves influenced by the opposition groups as and when the narrative fits.

Absence of formal and visible engagement with the military

Furthermore, the Church's process has left out a key player in the country's politics, which is the military. The authors noted that there can never be a successful dialogue in Zimbabwe without the involvement of the army. The dialogue processes being led by the Church have no formal mechanism aimed at attracting members of the security forces to the table. This aspect is clearly lacking in the ZCC engagement model. The Church needs to make inroads into the military for more formalised processes.

Monopolistic tendencies of ZCC processes

The Church-led ND has remained monopolistic. While platforms such as the POLAD have remained exclusive and partisan, the Church should have made deliberate efforts to connect it to other ongoing national processes and other actors in the civil society. The Church has monopolised the space leaving it in its own space and constituency. Thus, the drive for national dialogues has failed to gain traction and attention of ordinary Zimbabweans who are outside of the ZCC's constituencies, particularly POLAD and ZIICC platforms.

Conclusion

The paper has shown that the ZCC intensively utilised Lederach's theory in its ND processes. The ZCC's ND processes are being greatly informed by Lederach's approach particularly the localisation of peace building efforts as opposed to externally driven efforts. While Lederach values the work of middle-range leaders in building peace structures, ZCC focuses mainly on its local structures because of its widespread. Lederach's approach was influenced by his personal history in the resolution of armed conflicts, yet, the Zimbabwean situation is more complex, rejecting any simplistic definition. The ZCC model is rooted in ZCC's presence at local level where agendas are created. The paper amply noted the current challenges that affect successful establishment of peace infrastructures in Zimbabwe. Reliance on LEFs guarantees sustainability of peace structures without influence from outside actors who may compromise the local agenda. Working around convergence at organised society level is key



since it allows for packaging of agendas from Track 1 for more formal processes at policy level, yet the paper has noted that the NCP initiative has failed to be effective in that regard. In the NCP, peace building opportunities were missed.

The limitations that were noted include the seemingly slow pace in engaging other ecumenical actors who are politically connected in order to quicken the ND process. The ZCC model has also been further found wanting as it appeared to be monopolistic where theoretically it acknowledges the need to engage all political actors but has not made concrete formal efforts to engage the POLAD, which, despite its limitations, is made up of political actors accounted for in Track 3 of the model. Thus, there is need for ZCC to reach out to such critical actors for the ND process to be inclusive in the true sense of inclusivity. Through addressing the challenges that are faced by the NCP, ZCC model can be strengthened.

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