

The Serendipity of Moribund Political Vulnerable: The Plight of Displaced Children During The Liberation Struggle for Zimbabwe. (1970-1980)

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Abstract

To children who were exploited, neglected, abandoned, mistreated, abused, mutilated, sexually abused, forced to take part in the killing of others, displaced and forced to abandon their homes in fear of death and torture, life in their homes and in refugee camps was unbearable. This study wishes to demonstrate that displaced children during the liberation struggle faced violence, abuse, exploitation, marginalization, injustice, oppression and repression which forced them to abandon their homes to seek salvation in neighboring countries where their plight worsened rather than improved. Children who were refugees had in most cases lost everything, families, relatives, homes, friends and a sense of belonging. A harrowing and haunting past was their only baggage they had when they fled into refugee camps where life was also associated with humanitarian crisis. The plight of displaced children during the liberation struggle for Zimbabwe has largely escaped the attention of historians yet these children who were exposed to multiple dangers have a war time story to tell. Their stories have totally been forgotten when the history of the liberation struggle for Zimbabwe is being discussed. The study largely depended on oral interviews of those who were below the age of eighteen and were displaced by the liberation struggle across Rhodesia, archival sources and secondary sources.

Key words: Serendipity, Moribund, Vulnerable, Refugee, Displaced, Uprooted, Refugee Camp.

Introduction

This study wishes to capture the history and memories of those who were children during the liberation struggle and were uprooted and forced into refugee camps in Mozambique and Zambia. Displaced persons uprooted by war constituted one of the biggest political and humanitarian tragedies in Africa during the decolonization process. Africa had the largest and most serious refugee problem because of colonial oppression and liberation struggles such as in Guinea-Bissau, Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and South Africa. (Mizerez 1987:7) For the purpose of this discussion the following definitions will assist us. According to the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 protocol the term refugee shall apply to a person who:

...Owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular group or

political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country, or who not having a nationality and living outside the country of his former habitual residence...is unable or owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.

(The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies 1990:25)

The 1967 Protocol for the Status of Refugees and the 1969 OAU Convention governing the specific aspects of refugee problems in Africa went on to adopt another definition of refugees:

The term refugee shall also apply to every person, who owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his country of origin or nationality is compelled to leave his place of habitual residence in order to seek refuge in another place outside his country of origin or nationality.

(The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies 1990:25)

As much as the 1951 Convention and the 1967 OAU Convention broadened the definition of refugees, the Rhodesian government denied refugee status to Zimbabwean refugees in Mozambique, Botswana and Zambia. (The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies 1990:25). The government insisted that there must be formal determination of refugee status as required by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) that involved four basic steps. The refugee should present himself/herself to an immigration officer or police officer and make an application. A refugee advisory committee was to hold an inquiry. The refugee was to be issued with a document certifying the refugee status. Lastly, the refugee was given time to appeal if he/she was denied refugee status. (The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies 1990:25) The procedures required for one to be declared a refugee were an uphill task for most children in Rhodesia who had been displaced by the war. Most of the children who were refugees could not read or write and therefore applying for that status was simply impossible. Most of the children who had been displaced were not aware of these procedures. They did not seek refugee status out of ignorance of the procedures. Most of the children did not have any documents as "they had nothing to pack on leaving but their illusions and spirit of sacrifice." (Mizerez 1987:10). The majority of the children also escaped through unofficial entry points. It should be noted that this was a war situation and survival took precedence over everything.

For the purpose of this discussion, the term refugee shall refer to all children who fled and wanted to escape intolerable and repressive conditions in Southern Rhodesia to freedom and safety in neighboring countries, whether they had certificates endorsing their status or not. Refugee children were displaced or

uprooted children and unaccompanied minors (UAMs). These were children separated from their parents and communities responsible for their care and safety.

Justification of the Study

This study is concerned with one of the neglected theme in mainstream nationalist discourse of the liberation struggle of Zimbabwe, that of refugee camps and the fate of children. The plight of Zimbabweans/Africans in general and children in particular who fled their homes has escaped the minds of many historians. The whole subject of refugee children badly needs to be researched to fully understand the impact of the liberation struggle on vulnerable groups and the effects of conflict and violence on those who are not able to defend themselves. Historians have remained tight-lipped on their plight. The focus is on investigating the forgotten consequences of conflict and violence on Zimbabwean children who were displaced by the liberation struggle.

The other crucial reason why the history of children who were refugees is crucial is the fact that the history of refugee camps remains a contested terrain. During the liberation struggle, the white minority regime fallaciously argued that refugee camps were military camps. Therefore, this is an endeavor to unearth the large chunk of unearthed history of the liberation struggle. A large part of history has remained hidden and untouched. It is, therefore, the objective of this study to contribute to the existing studies on conflict and violence through a systematic investigation of the plight of children in refugee camps. This study is inspired by Graca Machel's argument that:

Millions of children are caught up in conflict in which they are not merely bystanders but targets. Some fall victims to a general onslaught against civilians, others die as part of a calculated genocide. Still other children suffer the effects of sexual violence or the multiple deprivations of armed conflict that expose them to hunger and disease.

(Machel 2001:2)

Therefore, this research is partly a response to this call, and my entry point is through children as victims of terror and counter terror. This study situates the issue of the impact of conflict and violence on children within the wider fields of conflict studies and vulnerability discourse. Children, just like women and the elderly, constitute a vulnerable group in society that easily falls victim in times of political strife and violence. The ideas of being caught in the middle and in crossfire are very relevant towards the understanding of the impact of conflict and violence on civilians and vulnerable groups.

The research is an investigation into the consequences of conflict and violence on Zimbabwean refugee children. There has been no specific study carried out on the effects of political violence on children and yet children are the worst affected

victims by conflict situation. Historians have forgotten the harm conflict and violence has on children below the age of 18 years and hence neglect them in their studies. They all seem to forget that war spares no- one and by far the worst affected are children. Children as the weakest of the weak lack the capacity and ability to protect and defend themselves and are the most vulnerable group. What should not escape our minds is the fact that it is a crime to make children victims of any kind political violence and conflict and no violence targeted towards children can be justified.

What makes this research very important is the fact that children's physical and psychological scars sustained during and after the liberation struggle have not healed. The lack of rehabilitation and treatment of children's physical and psychological scars remained many years after their experiences. Capturing the history of children affected by violence and conflict is a step towards the capturing and recovering histories of marginalized voices and is a step towards restoring peace and promoting future development of a peaceful nation. It is a fact that children who are socialized into democratic and tolerant behavior are the foundation of an orderly and peaceful society.

The research is conceived in revisionist histories as Zimbabwean history mainly reflects power relations which determine whose voice and opinions are recorded, who has power to speak on behalf of others and who is marginalized and who is silenced. What makes this research pertinent is the fact that there was no Truth and Reconciliation Commission like the one established in South Africa and Rwanda which gave victims a platform to share their horrendous experiences. The research is path breaking in many respects.

The need for a new narrative which captures the history of children

In terms of discourse the liberation struggle and independent Zimbabwe has attracted a lot of research interest and attention. What is disturbing is that the history of marginalized victims such as children has been neglected. Martin and Johnson mainly focused on the attacks at Chimoio and Tembwe. They did well by pointing out that the majority of the victims were unarmed women and children. (Martin and Johnson 1980:288) This demonstrates that a more rigorous study is essential. Ranger concentrated on peasants (T.Ranger,1985: 1-30) (Bhebe noted that, "Thousands of refugees continued to pour into Mozambique because of the easy access to that country from Zimbabwe. Huge camps were set up for them at Dondo, Chimoio and Tembwe" but unfortunately he ignored the issue of violence and its impact on children (Bhebe 1999: 67). Paul Majaka Nare, (Nare, 1995 :140) a former teacher at Manama Secondary School when teachers and students were abducted by ZIPRA forces and was organizer of ZAPU schools in Zambia

provide firsthand account of the terrible conditions for refugees in Zambia. He noted that there were young boys and girls residing in the numerous refugee camps, proving that there is need for capturing their experiences. Fay Chung (Chung 1995:140) who was in the ZANU Education Department in Mozambique noted that, "... camps were overflowing with refugees and recruits." She also highlighted that refugees faced food, accommodation and health crisis. This shows that refugees deserve historical attention to capture their memories of the liberation struggle. Chung also noted that, "Thousands of refugees were housed in Nyadzonja ..." (Chung 2006:141) Tanya Lyons also noted that women faced gender specific problems in camps in Mozambique and Zambia. She highlighted that prostitution and the sex for soap practice were common occurrences. (Lyons2004:191) Kriger (1992: 45) also failed to break the pattern of silence in terms of the plight of children. Nhongo-Simbanegavi (2000:50) lumped children together with woman yet children are not women and women are not children. Schmidt (2013:175) only mentioned in passing that, the Rhodesian Air Force bombed Chimoio, a ZANLA refugee camp in Mozambique killing at least 1 200 men, women and children. Ellert, a former Rhodesian police officer only mentioned the success story of the Selous Scouts in bombing the Nyadzonja refugee camp and his focus was not on refugee children. Machel (2001: 26) demonstrated that war has forced many people to abandon their homes. She noted that, "War drives millions of people from their homes. An estimated 20 million are children, deprived of security of their communities and exposed to multiple dangers..." (Machel 2001:26).

Push Factors which Uprooted Children

When the liberation struggle gained momentum, there was an escalation of violence and the political environment became highly militarized. The situation was made worse by the emergence of para-military or private armies who unleashed unprecedented violence, torturing, assaulting, murdering, razing huts to the ground, confiscating property and destroying buildings. Many children as a result of the violence and the militarization of politics were displaced. These uprooted children who were forced to flee because of the terror and trauma at home faced many difficulties. This section is concerned about children who were deprived of their parents, of the possibility to grow-up in their family environment, refugee children who were displaced by the armed liberation struggle. These children under difficult conditions need special consideration and mention when the history of the country is discussed as many children were forced to flee to Botswana, Zambia and Mozambique by the intensification of the liberation struggle. By 1979, there were about 30 000 refugees in Botswana 36 000 refugees in Mozambique and 25 000 in Zambia. (Martin and Johnson 1981 :276).

Many children who were refugees were forced into exile by a number of factors. Most of the children were victims of violence, wounded through torture, raped by armed Rhodesian soldiers and at times were depressed by witnessing their parents being killed and terrified to experience the same horrific experiences. This clearly shows that the children who were displaced by war had psychological problems that required urgent attention. One ex-refugee who was in Mozambique noted that:

I was ten years old when my father and mother were taken by the soldiers. They poured petrol over their bodies and set them alight. It was painful seeing my parents crying and burning until they collapsed. I was terrified to stay at home and I had to run away from home. (Interview with Zindoga 2014)

Such an experience needs special attention from the perspective of true experiences of the oppressed Africans as it helps to unravel some of the darkest episodes in the history of liberation struggle. Further, such experiences were also overwhelmingly stressful as children ran away in a state of shock, not knowing where to go, not knowing whether he/she was going to meet friends or foes and not knowing whether he was being followed or not. (Zindoga 2014). This was also against the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, which clearly stipulated that childhood is entitled to special care and assistance stating that, "The child by reason of his physical or mental immaturity needs special safeguards and care..." (Dentruck 1992:43)

These children who vanished from their old communities into exile had to go through horrible experiences. There were a lot of hazards and dangers that faced them from the time of departure. They were also haunted by anxiety as they looked forward to reach unknown destinations. One child who was a refugee noted that, "I did not know whether I was going to meet friends or foes and whether I was going to die or not." (Sakarombe 2014). Children who were refugees were uprooted by factors beyond their control and beyond their imaginations. Many were victims of gross human rights violations, victims of political and psychological torture and had witnessed horrible experiences.

The number of refugees increased as more and more people started to leave the country to join the guerrillas. According to Paulos Majaka Nare (1995, 131), children who fled encountered a lot of difficulties as spotter planes and helicopters by the Rhodesian soldiers hunted them down. During such encounters some children ran away in all directions and ended up being refugees. Some children who wanted to join the liberation struggle ended up being refugees because of their age. Refugee children experienced nightmares as they longed for home and loved ones. Many lost their chances, culture and identity (Interview with Mukura :2014). Therefore, it is clear that exile was both stressful and traumatizing especially to children because of their age as they were not emotionally mature.

The Plight of Children in Refugee Camps

Children who were separated from their families were vulnerable. Conditions for exiled children in most cases were not appropriate for their normal development. One exiled child at Victory Camp in Zambia noted that:

There was no adequate food for normal development and in some cases no food for the hungry. No medical facilities for the sick, no help in time for the helpless and no shelter for the sick and needy. Life in refugee camps was heart breaking.

(Interview with Nyamaropa : 2015)

This testimony clearly shows that life in refugee camps was unbearable to most children. There was no law to protect the young and the innocent. An ex-refugee noted that "life in refugee camps was a nightmare." (Interview with Nyamaropa: 2015)

Many children in refugee camps especially outside the country died as a result of outbreaks of epidemics. There were almost no medical personnel, and if ever there were some nurses they were without drugs and most children perished while the nurses watched helplessly. It should also be noted that life in refugee camps was not suitable for the full development of children who required medical specialists. Many children because of the trauma they had gone through, had maladaptive behavior, some had mental problems, some suffered from depression and some were highly aggressive as manifestations of social displacement syndrome. (Interview with Moyo: 2014)

Shortage of medical facilities and medical doctors was a major problem in refugee camps. In 1977 when Dr Herbert Ushewokunze arrived at Chibawawa, there was one stethoscope, two thermometers and 12 000 people. (Johnson and Martin 1980: 272) As the liberation struggle intensified the influx of refugees into Mozambique and Zambia increased tremendously. In 1977 there were 29 000 refugees in the camps such as Chibawawa, Mavudzi and Gondola. (Martin and Johnson 1981: 272) As numbers of refugees increased cases of epidemics also increased: these included malaria, bilharzia, kwashiorkor and gastroenteritis. Conditions in these refugee camps were made horrible by the general lack of provisions such as shoes, clothing, blankets and medicine. Under such circumstances many young people died in refugee camps.

Conditions in refugee camps were appalling. There was no water, no sanitation, shelter, no blankets and no hospitals in refugee camps. The amount of suffering caused by hunger and disease was extensive. (Interview with Rukoya : 2015) Machel (2001:27) pointed out that,

In the chaos of conflict and escape, many children fall into the harm's way because they are separated from their parents. Deprived of physical care and emotional

security, they become more vulnerable to hunger, disease, violence, military recruitment and sexual assault.

The situation was worsened when the Rhodesian forces introduced poisons, which caused bleeding from the nose, mouth and ears. (Interview with Mukura: 2015). Many children in these camps perished and were far from safety in these refugee camps. Therefore life for most children was horrible and a nightmare.

The Rhodesian government also made many calculated moves to destroy children, which constitute genocide. Children in exile especially in countries bordering Southern Rhodesia were far from being safe. The Rhodesian security forces conducted raids on refugee and military camps in Zambia, Botswana and Mozambique in 1976 and 1977. The situation was worsened by raids launched by South African Defence Forces (SADF) into Zambia, Zimbabwe, Lesotho and Botswana. Regional destabilization became a key foreign policy strategy by the South African regime. (Britteon and Minty 1995: 28). Such raids claimed lives of innocent children, non-combatants and old men and women. SADF killed inhabitants of a refugee camp in Angola and 298 children perished during such acts. (Britteon and Minty 1995: 31). On 9 August 1976 Rhodesian troops attacked Nyadzonya camp in Mozambique. Alexander Kanengoni who was in Mozambique explains the horrible situation at Nyadzonia when he arrived there soon after it was attacked:

We were confronted with an endless sea of dead bodies stretching in all directions and I shook my head in disbelief. There were corpses everywhere. There were corpses of babies strapped on their mother's backs, there were corpses of small boys and girls. There were corpses of young men and women. The corpses had all sorts of mutilations: decapitated heads, shattered jaws, crushed and missing limbs, disemboweled entrails, scattered brains, gouged eyes, everything.

(Sunday Mail, 8 August 2004)

Chung also noted that,

On 8 August 1976, the Selous Scouts, the anti-guerrilla unit of the Rhodesian forces, entered Mozambique through Penhalonga... Arriving at Nyadzoia at 7 o'clock in the morning of 9 August, dressed as FLELIMO troops, with their faces blackened and singing liberation songs, they were welcomed by children who climbed onto the army trucks. The cries of joy changed to screams of horror as the soldiers shot them dead. Nyadzonia had been invaded by enemy troops...

An eyewitness who was at Nyadzonia painfully recalls the horrific incident:

Then we heard shots... Those who were nearest fell. They died right there. Then they began to pursue those who were running away towards the river. They got out of their vehicles firing continuously. On the road the vehicles crushed the bodies and everything that was in their way. Many people died at the river, when they were trying to cross it

to escape into the bush, above all, children, old people, women and those who didn't know how to swim. They burned the houses with people inside... Chung 2004:142)

Attacks on refugee camps show that the most devastating cause of death and disability to refugee children were the direct effects of war. Khan the High commissioner for the UNHCR, says that, "To be a refugee is in itself a tragedy. That such a large group of refugees should have been victims of indiscriminate bloodshed make this incident particularly shocking and abominable." (Martin and Johnson 1980: 273) Such attacks on children also showed that life in exile was not safe for most of the children. Even those who survived the attacks suffered tremendously. The horrifying experiences created psychological problems as many survivors of the Nyadzonia attack screamed and made suicide attempts due to post-stress traumatic disorders (PTSD). (Martin and Johnson 1981: 273) Such experiences distorted the normal development of children as they developed nightmares, became aggressive and developed emotional outbursts. The slaughtering of children leaving corpses scattered was horrible to the survivors. What also makes attacks on refugee camps more painful is the fact that the SS known as the 'Skuz apos' who were responsible for the attacks celebrated the massacre. Their leader, R. F Reid Daly (1990: 56) who proudly wrote that the Nyadzonya massacre was the biggest single kill of the war. Thus the attacks sowed terror in the minds of many young children in targeted areas in neighbouring countries.

The introduction of education as an instrument to contain the young boys and girls in refugee camps did not help much as life in these camps was unbearable. There were more than 30 000 Zimbabwean children in Mozambique and about 18 000 children in Zambia. (Martin and Johnson 1981: 273) Life in Victory Camp, J Z Moyo, Mavhudzi, Pungwe III, Chimoio, Gondola, Ossibissa, Tembwe and many other camps in countries neighboring Zimbabwe for the displaced and terrified victims of war was not conducive for a profitable and viable education system. There were numerous problems that affected the effective running of a proper and beneficial academic programme.

Nare (1995: 78) who was assigned to set up an education Department in Zambia noted that, "A Monday found me at Victory Camp trying to recruit and convince the residents that the education was to become part of our occupations in the struggle. I met very hostile attitudes" We did not only look like fools but we sounded strange and highly irrelevant"

He also noted that most of the children were not prepared to join classes, as they believed that the whole programme was unsuitable. Nare (1995: 78) says that most children were hostile to the programme and noted that after all they had just run away from it at home.

The hostile attitude by children should be understood from a historical context in the sense that these children were victims of a situation and as such they had been affected badly by the colonial system. The Rhodesian government regarded these children as “prospective terrorists”. Such views were more shattering than anything else to these young boys and girls. They clearly knew that it was more likely than not that they were going to be attacked. This made them restless and fearful and they desired and preferred military training rather than putting them in groups and classes, thus making them more vulnerable and exposed to some form of attack. Mr Zvarevashe (Interview with 2014) who was at Nyadzonya camp during the massacres noted that, “I could no longer trust some of these educated people. Making me sit down and learn was like being told to sit on a time bomb”. Unpredictable attacks and bombardments by the enemy were rife.

As if the above-mentioned problems were not enough, there was no shelter, not enough books or no books at all, no blackboards and pens. Nare (1995: 78) pointed out that, “There were hardly any teaching aids in the form of chalk, chalkboards, books and pens. Without these basic necessities in education it is difficult to imagine how these young children were expected to learn. The background of these children also needs to be put into consideration as they had been brought up in glaring, unequal and oppressive conditions. To make matters worse, these young black children had a multitude of stereotypes and these were responsible for the reasons why the children decided to run away from Zimbabwe. Zvarevashe noted that, “I found it contradictory to learn as I was made to believe that everything western was bad. Having the education system was like making us love our enemies.” (Interview with Zvarevashe 2014) It should be noted that the guerrilla campaigns that captured the hearts and imaginations of many young children were totally against the colonial system of education.

The other major problem was the fact that the war had disrupted the education system in Southern Rhodesia and as such many children had been out of school for a long time. Many children had been shot; some of the children went missing leaving no trace at all. (Interview with Zvarevashe 2014) Under Martial Law many children were arrested and a number of children lost their lives. The entire schooling system in most rural areas was grounded to a halt as the security forces tightened their grip on most schools since they regarded schools as recruiting grounds for terrorist activities. Consequently, many students dropped out of school before they were forced to run away from home. In these refugee camps there were problems of older and bigger students who frequently threatened to beat younger teachers. (Nare, 1995: 78) To make matters worse there were not enough qualified teaching staff in these camps let alone those who had attempted secondary education to teach the young boys and girls. The few qualified teachers who were there opted to go for further studies anywhere as long as they could be

moved from these horrible conditions of life. Some students even opted for marriage to Zambian villagers and some opted for military training. (Nare, 1995: 78). In Zambia there were 30 000 children and three qualified teachers. It was also impossible to continue with educational work because of continuous attacks from Rhodesian forces. In 1977, Chindunduma school in Zambia was bombed. Hundreds of children perished and survivors suffered from severe napalm burns and shrapnel wounds. Psychological trauma, trances, and hiccups affected most children who survived the bombings. (Chung 1995: 95).

Many refugees were captured or were executed by the Rhodesian security forces on Rhodesian borders. Thousands of children were victims of landmine attacks as the fields were sown not with life-giving seeds but with seeds of destruction. Some perished on the spot while some were maimed or badly injured. Those who sustained serious injuries were left to die a painful death by the security forces that denied them access to medical facilities. This was not only a case of inhuman practice but also an act against the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which clearly stipulated that:

State parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure that a child who is seeking refugee status or who is considered a refugee in accordance with applicable international and domestic law and procedures shall, whether accompanied by his or her parents or by any other person, receive protection and humanitarian assistance in the enjoyment of applicable rights set forth in the convention and other international human rights or humanitarian instruments to which the said states are parties.

(Children and war.gva@icrc.org)

The plight of Zimbabwean refugees in general and children in particular was worsened as the Rhodesian force intensified its attacks on neighboring countries. The attacks escalated as the Smith regime mentioned that under international law it was entitled to invade neighboring countries in pursuit of guerrillas who had escaped across the borders. (IDAF 1980:61). By March 1977 the Smith regime had mounted 143 acts of aggression against Mozambique, killing 1 432 civilians, mostly children. (IDAF 1980:61). Most Zimbabwean children who had escaped to adjoining villages in Botswana were also victimized as security forces destroyed unprotected defenseless villages. The Smith regime was in fact violating international laws, for example, Article XXV of The Hague regulations of 1899 prohibited the 'attack or bombardment of towns, villages, habitations or buildings which are not defended.' (Gardam 1987: 25). This law clearly protected non-combatants who under international law should have been immune from any attacks. The Smith regime, besides violating humanitarian laws, exposed civilians who became extremely vulnerable targets.

Such acts of violence had devastating consequences on children. Children who were in exile, had been displaced by factors beyond their control and doubtlessly beyond their scope of imagination and level of conceptualization. Full-scale invasions of refugee camps, which involved large numbers of troops, armoured cars and bombers, resulted in children witnessing scenes, which psychologically affected them. To most children life in refugee camps was far from expectations and demands of international law that govern humanitarian statutes. One ex-refugee noted that 'life in these safe havens was unsafe.' (Interview with Gwede: 2015). Such experiences terrified the refugees as they tried to live a whole life that was full of fear and of uncertainty. This in many ways shattered the potential hopes and nascent emotional development of the children. To make matters worse, there were no efforts or mechanisms to deal with the severe stress that haunted children in refugee camps.

Psychological Problems Faced by Refugee Children

Children who were refugees at Nyadzonia, Mavhudzi, Chimoio, Gondola, Ossibissa and J Z Moyo camps were also isolated from home and from their families. It was difficult for unaccompanied minors to get news from home and to know whether their parents were still alive or not. This feeling of loneliness haunted and devastated the children who felt unwanted and forgotten. One ex-refugee noted, "In our world there was no one, no communication, no relatives and no parents." (Interview with Chakaipa 2015). The isolation was against international humanitarian law, which clearly stipulated that, "Everyone has the right to exchange news with family and receive relief." (Picket, 1995 :40).

Therefore life in exile for most children was unbearable as families were not in a position to provide relief or even to communicate with the exiled children to give them peace of mind. This was devastating in the sense that nothing is more destructive to a person's morale than anxiety about those dear to him or her. Refugees as involuntary migrants experienced psychological problems, which needed multidisciplinary teams to address. Lack of such experts to assist these children resulted in trauma and depressions. Lack of mechanisms to assist the uprooted children exacerbated the problems faced by children in exile.

Most if not all children in exile were ill equipped to cope with the problems that faced them. The disruption of family life prior to flight, the witnessing of horrific experiences and the cloud of uncertainty because of life threatening experiences created a lot of problems for children in exile. Lack of psychosocial needs to assist these children in coping such as refugee counselors affected the cognitive development of exiled children. According to Mr. Mashuwe who was a nurse at Mavhudzi refugee camp, many children in camp had psychological problems such

as becoming angry easily, becoming upset easily, frequently complaining of pain and seeking approval and affection. He also noted that psychiatric problems were common because of experiences before exile and life in exile. To most children both war and exile were traumatizing and led to mental disorders and psychological breakdowns. (Interview with Mushuwe 2014) According to Dr Nguyen Ba Thien and Dr Brigitte Malapert (1996:215) in their article, 'The Psychological Consequences for Children of War, Trauma and Migration;

Every refugee child has been traumatized by war. The trauma will have been physical (prison, forced labor camp, brutal treatment, a violent environment, famine...) and psychological (repressive climate, fear of death, anguish of separation, loss of loved ones, etc).

Children who had undergone such experiences needed counsellors to forget what had transpired in the past and to come to terms with it and get rid of the anxiety and anguish and attain psychological adjustment. Children in refugee camps were exposed to more violence and attacks rather than humanitarian assistance.

In refugee camps in neighboring countries of Zimbabwe it was difficult for international organizations to operate for various reasons. The Rhodesian government persistently attacked refugee camps in Mozambique and Botswana on the grounds that there were guerrillas who were attacking Rhodesia. The UNHCR was also incapacitated by logistical and political problems to provide relief to the refugees although in 1978 they confirmed that refugee camps such as Nyadzonia in Mozambique contained refugees only. (IDAF 1980:45) Such attacks directly affected children in refugee camps. To make matters worse, the children's futures were doomed as they were loaded with new problems before the off-loading process that helps children to recover from the traumas of the past. It should be noted that even the schools that were introduced failed to heal the psychological wounds of the children as most of these had learning difficulties. Most had concentration and behavioral problems and were aggressive towards others and even their teachers. (Interview with Madombwe 2015).

Lack of medical provisions to heal the uprooted children exacerbated their problems. The Rhodesian government used denial of medical provisions as one of the major weapons against 'terrorism'. Most medical doctors during the colonial era were partisan and violated medical ethics. The law of Geneva clearly stipulated, "in exchange for the immunity granted to it, medical personnel must abstain from any hostile act." (Pitchet1995 :69) As much as doctors were protected to carry out their duties without fear and favour, many colonial doctors were not prepared to antagonize relationships with their paymasters and assist refugees. Medical personnel the world over are given protection as healers. Many children who

needed assistance perished in refugee camps, as doctors never visited most refugee camps. Fay Chung noted that refugee children not only had no shelter, blackboards, chalk, books or paper but they were without adequate food and medicines. Many died from a combination of malnutrition and endemic diseases. (Chung 1995:140) One ex-refugee painfully recalled "I never saw a doctor in our camps. Many children died and death was part and parcel of our life style." (Interview with Madombwe 2014) Chung (1995:141) noted that Parirenyatwa Hospital in Zambia was bombed killing many patients. All this made it impossible for children to receive medical provisions in times of need.

Many young people perished in refugee camps because of lack of concern on the part of the government and the colonial medical fraternity from diseases that could have been treated such as anorexia, constipation, and headaches. These children were also constantly haunted by sleep disorders and anxiety.

Gender Specific Problems Faced by Female Uprooted Children

Life in refugee camps and for children in exile was also more unbearable to the girl child than to the boy child for several reasons. Female children faced a number of gender specific problems. Sexual violence, sexual harassment, forced prostitution, sexually transmitted diseases and lack of sanitary pads tremendously affected the lives of some female child refugees. According to Chung (2006:126), young women were regarded as "warm blankets", fruits and spoils of victory by guerrillas in military and refugee camps. She noted that ZANLA commanders demanded women for "night duties." One ex-refugee who was in Mavhudzi camp noted that rape to them was unavoidable but a norm'. (Interview with Chirove 2015) Accepting rape as unavoidable was traumatic and was both physically and mentally torturing. The use of female refugees as sex objects created various problems for the children. In some cases, children ended up having children to look after. With lack of pre-natal and post-natal care or provisions in the refugee camps, many young mothers perished. There were no facilities to deal with those who developed complications, especially on their first experiences in the mothering process. F. Chung says that "Many died from a combination of malnutrition and endemic diseases". (Chung: 1995:141). Thus the life of these young mothers was unbearable and many mothers and their children perished unnoticed and unmentioned.

Most female refugees were forced into prostitution as survival strategy to access food and other basic commodities which were scares. Without any option, many of these minors were driven into prostitution. Child prostitution means those situations in which children under the age of 18 engage in regularized sexual activity for material or monetary benefits. (Gardam 1987: 54) Thus prostitution

became a survival strategy and many female children became abandoned single mothers. What made the situation for female children more difficult was the fact that the guerrillas, who, to most children were their heroes and liberators, victimized them. One ex-refugee pointed out that 'to us everyone was our enemy as our brothers became our new oppressors'. (Interview with Masiwa 2015) Most female refugees suffered from anxiety and depression as they had lost everything. Most had lost their families and there was nobody to protect them. One ex-refugee painfully noted that the liberation struggle made them lose everything and in the process they gained nothing. (Interview with Masiwa 2015).

To most female refugees life was a nightmare. During attacks by Rhodesian forces many young girls who were in exile were captured. Those who were captured were victims of violence as they were assaulted physically and then forced to travel long distances and raped. In most cases they were gang raped and at times forced to witness their mates being raped. This was traumatizing and constituted of mental torture. One ex-refugee who was caught along the Botswana border by the security forces noted, "As I waited for my turn to be raped I collapsed but when I regained consciousness the soldiers were still waiting for me." (Interview with Chapwanya 2015) Such experience clearly shows that life for female refugees was terrible and many children were humiliated and dehumanized by rape. All these had psychological repercussions for them. Female refugees in general and girls who were refugees in particular faced a lot of problems because of their lack of basic provisions such as sanitary ware. As a result of fear many young girls developed menstrual disorders of the stress associated with life in exile. Most were humiliated during their menstrual periods as they moved around with blood stained dresses. (Interview with Chapwanya 2015).

One ex-refugee noted that, most young girls had to use rags and newspapers during their menstrual periods. (Interview with Chapwanya 2015) Besides the fact that this was unhygienic it was also a health hazard. With lack of guidance and emotional support such experiences shattered the lives of these young children. Their experiences were worsened by the fact that as children they had no capacity to face these problems and there was no one to protect them. The situation was worsened by the fact that humanitarian organizations were not permitted to operate in refugee camps. Some female refugees ended up without basics such as panties (Interview with Chapwanya 2015). This was not only degrading but also humiliating. With an element of insecurity and uncertainty threatening refugees, all these problems were unbearable. Studies carried out after the Second World War on children established that age had an influence on the repercussions of war. (Mizerez 1987 :256) With lack of provisions to alleviate the stressful situation, many refugees developed psychological disorders such as lack of concentration, nightmares and gynecological complications.

Conclusion

This study demonstrated that life was unbearable to children who were forced to flee into exile to escape from the war, widespread repression, arrests and harassment. Refugee children were vulnerable from acts of destabilization by SADF and the Rhodesian forces on the pretext that they were SWAPO, ZANU and ZAPU bases. Many thousands perished at Nyadzonja, Tembwe, Chimoio and Kossinnga refugee camp. Life was a nightmare and unbearable for those who survived and without rehabilitation after the war, those who witnessed these horrible experiences have open scars and psychological wounds. Refugee camps for Zimbabwean children were bleak environments where mute poverty and disease were a common place. Thus, refugee camps in Mozambique, Botswana and Zambia were not sanctuaries for children as they were attacked, harassed and intimidated. Children in exile experienced traumatizing experiences, displacement, separation, bereavement, violence, and sexual abuse.

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