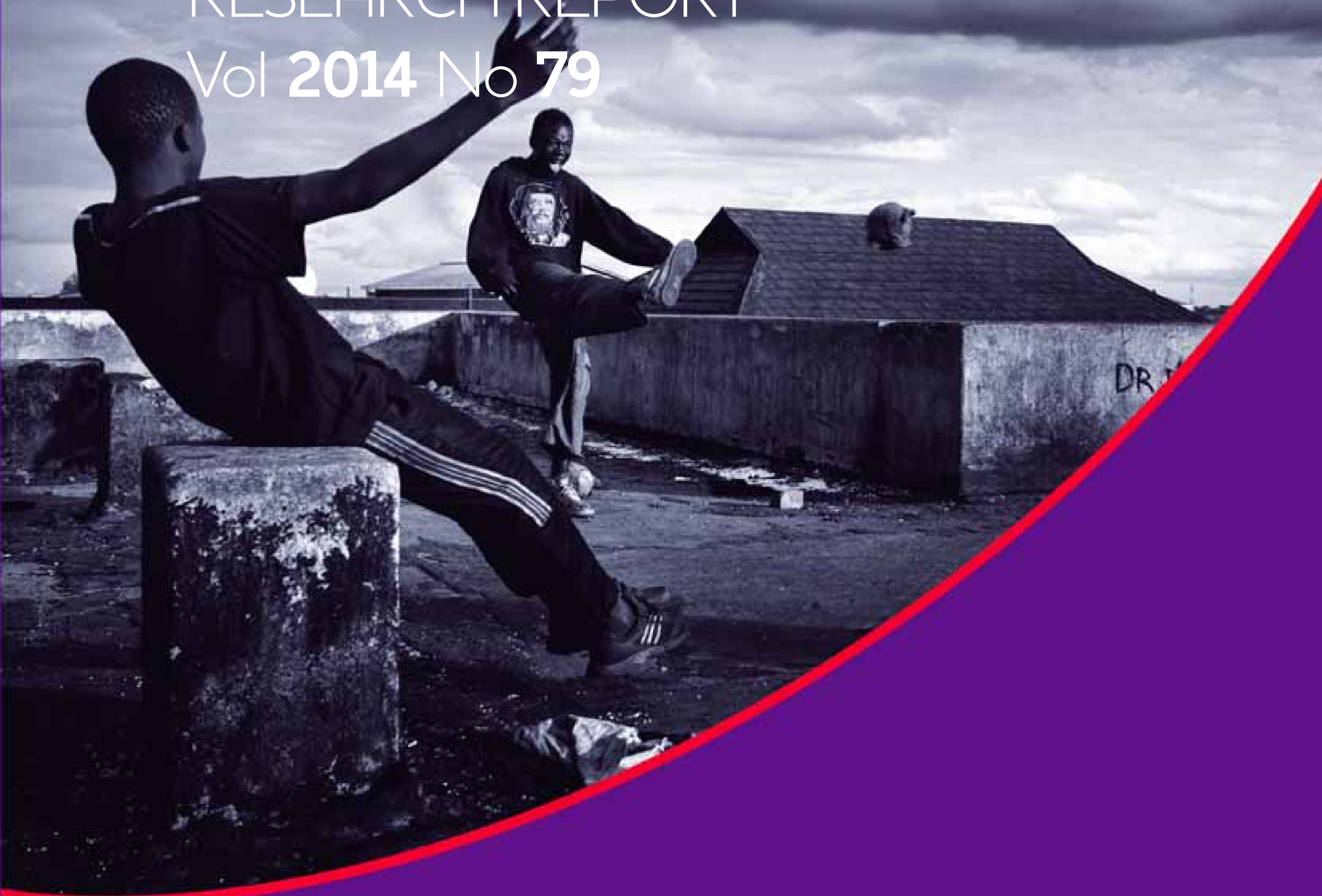

Being a Born-free. Violence, Youth and Agency in Zimbabwe

Marjoke A. Oosterom and Lloyd Pswarayi

December 2014

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Summary

This research report presents the findings of case study research with youth in six locations in Zimbabwe, carried out within the Power, Violence, Citizenship and Agency (PVCA) programme. It shows how young people experience growing up as citizens in a country known for its repressive regime, and highlights the differences for young men and young women. Young people consider political violence as one of many forms of violence and other challenges they face in life. Election periods bring increased risk, when youth feel targeted. After the turbulence of elections has waned, surveillance by state security agents persists, affecting how young people use the public sphere. Between elections, forms of structural violence pose more challenges to youth than physical, political violence: patronage along party or ethnic lines is a major barrier to finding jobs, and generational differences deny young people a voice. High unemployment levels can result in youth participating in violence orchestrated by political actors. This research shows also that family and peers have a strong influence on how young people choose to engage in the public sphere and respond to the polarised political environment. Youth empowerment strategies thus need to go beyond economic empowerment. This report argues that a shift in vision is required so that government, aid agencies and civil society recognise the importance of active citizenship among youth and make it a priority area for interventions. Programmes should build the citizen capabilities of young people and improve relations between them, their parents and communities, and public authority.

Keywords: violence; political violence; youth; gender; citizenship; agency; governance; Zimbabwe.

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About the programme

The Power, Violence, Citizenship and Agency (PVCA) programme is an action research project designed by researchers at the Institute of Development Studies and carried out with a number of institutional partners. This project addresses the need to shift from a state-focused to a more citizen-centred perspective in contexts of fragility and chronic violence. The project aims to understand how citizens deal with violence, in particular how they confer legitimacy on, or withhold it from, the various forms of leadership and authority in their environment. The project engages with debates on political settlement by showing how citizens view the political settlement in their context, and how it informs their agency in response to violence.

Abbreviations and acronyms

CBO	Community-based organisation
CIO	Central Intelligence Organisation
GNU	Government of National Unity
GPA	Global Political Agreement
GTH	Grace to Heal
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MDC-T	Movement for Democratic Change – Tsvangirai
NYS	National Youth Service
TOL	Tree of Life
PVCA	Power, Violence, Citizenship and Agency
RAU	Research and Advocacy Unit
SADC	Southern African Development Community
ZANLA	Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army
ZANU	Zimbabwe African National Union
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People’s Union
ZIPRA	Zimbabwe People’s Revolutionary Army

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Introduction

This research report presents the findings of case study research in Zimbabwe, carried out within the Power, Violence, Citizenship and Agency (PVCA) programme. It discusses how young Zimbabwean citizens experience their citizenship and respond to forms of political violence in their country. The generation that was born after 1980 has grown up in an increasingly repressive regime environment. The regime, the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), is known for its intimidation tactics and violent suppression of political opposition, particularly during the election periods. Academic studies on Zimbabwean youth have discussed the manipulation and co-option of youth by political parties, which sometimes use them to carry out violent acts, against a background of rising youth unemployment (Dzimiri 2014). This corresponds with a sub-section of the literature on youth in developing countries, which describes the 'youth bulge' as a reservoir of trouble makers and militants (Urdal 2004). There are, however, large groups of ordinary youth who do not engage in political violence, but who try to develop and increase their opportunities in everyday life, navigating the political landscape. It is this ordinary youth that this study is interested in.

The central question the PVCA programme seeks to answer is: which forms of agency do men and women exercise in response to insecurity and violence? The research in Zimbabwe focuses on youth from 16 to 25 years old. Like the other PVCA case studies (see Oosterom 2014; Scott-Villiers *et al.* 2014; Tadros 2014), the study takes a 'seeing like a citizen' approach (Gaventa 2010) to analysing violence: a bottom-up view of violence and politics, how they are entangled, and how citizens exercise agency in response to violence in their everyday lives. This approach acknowledges that different social identities – such as gender and age – shape citizens' perceptions and agency. Using this lens, the study explores how young citizens experience political violence and how they respond, specifically looking at how gender differences inform their agency. Studies on violence in Zimbabwe have highlighted the 'peaks' in political violence around the national elections (Badza 2008; Laakso 2002; LeBas 2006). This study focuses on everyday experiences of violence to address the relationship between political violence and other, more structural forms of violence outside election periods.

The report describes the range of types of violence as experienced by youth at the local level, in six urban, peri-urban and rural areas of Zimbabwe; in the Mashonaland and Matabeleland regions. It shows how young people experience growing up as citizens in a country known for its repressive regime, and highlights the differences for young men and women. Election periods are periods of increased risk, when youth feel targeted. After the turbulence of elections has waned, surveillance by state security agents persists, which affects how young people use the public sphere. Young people consider political violence as one among the many forms of violence and other challenges they face in life. For young women, domestic violence, and assaults of verbal and physical abuse within their communities, are what they experience more frequently. For young men, local crime, lack of jobs and the difficulty of starting a family are major challenges. In between elections, forms of structural violence pose more challenges to youth than

physical, political violence: patronage along party or ethnic lines is a major barrier to finding jobs, and generational differences deny young people a voice.

The predominant explanation for youth involvement in violence is the high level of youth unemployment (World Bank 2011). This is also suggested for the Zimbabwean context (Hamauswa and Manyeruke 2012). Others have presented a more nuanced perspective, pointing out the various reasons why political parties have successfully mobilised youth to utilise violence around elections, and for campaign activities more broadly (Dzimiri 2014). This research, however, shows that many young people try to stay away from party politics as much as possible and if they do join in, it is often in order to protect themselves and their families. Some have developed initiatives that help them stay out of politics and that help to improve their lives at the same time. Furthermore, the research shows that unemployment is indeed important, but family and peers have a strong influence on how young people choose to engage in the public sphere and respond to the polarised political environment. Another factor that can influence the decision whether or not to engage in politics is that political parties offer recognition, status and a possibility for gaining experience aside from any material incentives.

This can have important implications for policy. Since unemployment is seen as a primary driver of youth involvement in violence, the creation of employment for youth is a key strategy to resolve this (World Bank 2011). Such an approach neglects other forms of exclusion experienced by young people and other social and political relationships that motivate violence. A focus on economic inclusion and economic empowerment is insufficient to make young people better citizens, and fails to recognise that they want to be acknowledged as social and political agents. This report will argue that other, more comprehensive and far-reaching policy responses are required, as current approaches do not respond to the magnitude of the problems that youth face, and nor do they unlock the potential of youth. First, and above all, a shift in vision is required that sees active citizenship among youth as a priority area that needs diverse, comprehensive programmes and strategies. For thinking about specific programmes, young people want and need opportunities to meet and interact socially outside the deeply politicised arena. This can establish a social foundation for learning and practising how to discuss, and take action on, issues of public concern. Second, strategies need to build 'citizen capabilities' among youth such as civic leadership, give them experience in collective action, and enable them to gain experience in negotiating with public authorities. Third, to overcome a sense of social exclusion that undermines citizen agency, social relations between young people, their families and communities need to be improved.

This report is structured as follows. Section 1 outlines the central concepts of this study: active citizenship, violence, and youth. Section 2 describes the research process, the six research sites and the research methodology. Section 3 presents the findings. It starts with an overview of the types of violence that youth experience, ranging from physical violence to structural violence. The findings also reveal their perspectives on the situation of youth in Zimbabwe. Subsequent sections describe the everyday life and social backgrounds of the young people, and how this informs their agency. The final sections show the various ways in which young people deal with political violence and intimidation. The conclusion summarises the most important findings and ends with recommendations for actors that are interested in youth empowerment programmes.

1 Youth and citizen agency in contexts of violence

Zimbabwe is a repressive regime environment, which has seen high levels of political violence around the time of elections and continual attempts to suppress freedom of the media, actors in the political opposition and civil society, and the citizenry in general, ever since the ZANU-PF government came to power in 1980. As for each of the studies carried out within the Power, Violence, Citizenship and Agency (PVCA) programme, the point of departure for this case study in Zimbabwe is to understand how citizens have agency in contexts of violence. This study adds to an emergent body of literature on citizen engagement in repressive regime environments. The case study of Zimbabwe specifically asks how the country's *youth* experience and respond to their political environment and the violence that occurs. The theoretical framework of power, violence, citizenship and agency was therefore broadened to include a focus on youth and violence.

This report focuses on the lived experience of youth in the context of Zimbabwe and adopts the perspective of 'seeing like a young citizen'. The report, as well as the research process, aims to let youth speak for themselves when reflecting on their situation and violence. This is an important difference from many existing studies on youth and violence, some of which are discussed in this section. Many of these studies have almost objectified young people in an attempt to explain youth involvement in violence. Sommers (2011) has therefore called for in-depth ethnographic research that brings the voices of non-elite youth into the debate about violence, and for structural causes of violence to be included in the analysis, instead of solely a focus on young people as perpetrators. The ways in which young people express agency in response to violence need to be analysed against the wider social-political context that informs the situation of youth in society, taking into account the sub-identities and diversity of youth. Their backgrounds and living conditions shape their agency in response to the issues they face, including violence.

The first section below outlines the conceptual framing of active citizenship and agency as used in this study. It then discusses some current thinking about agency in settings affected by violent conflict and repression. The subsequent sections discuss the concepts of youth and highlight the main points from the existing literature on the relationship between youth and violence.

1.1 Citizen agency in repressive regime environments

The research project is firmly grounded in an active citizenship approach, which views the concept as 'a social process through which individuals and social groups engage in claiming, expanding or losing rights' (Isin and Turner 2002). This takes citizenship beyond a notion of rights of individual citizens that they were 'given' by the state. Instead, a citizen is a person with rights, who should be able to participate actively and equally in public life, in the processes where rights are defined, and in decision-making processes that affect their lives. The approach extends the meaning of citizenship as a relationship between the citizen and the state, to include relationships among citizens, and between citizens and

communities. Citizens often define citizenship, their rights and duties not only in relation to the state but also in relation to their social environment and collective life (Kabeer 2005). A perspective on citizenship that encompasses relationships between citizens also implies that citizens have obligations towards their communities and vice versa. Often the object of citizenship struggles is to change society itself. Citizens may aim to gain recognition and demand rights and equality from the state, but citizens also make similar demands on fellow citizens.

Taking an actor-oriented approach to citizenship brings to the fore the values people are struggling for, the rights they claim, and the collective action they take to attain those rights. This approach to citizenship focuses on *agency*, the conditions that limit or support agency, and the capacities to act as citizens (Nyamu-Musembi 2005). The concept of agency is thus integral to a notion of active citizenship and refers to the *potential* to reflect, imagine and act, and it may be manifested in concrete actions (Frie 2008). People's capacity to act as agents depends on their histories and social and cultural backgrounds. It is through social interactions that the individual becomes aware of his/her rights, learns about forms of citizen engagement, and gains a political consciousness (Kabeer 2005; Lister 2003).

Important for the sense of citizenship is the question of what a citizen identity entails. There is a direct relationship between one's understanding of his or her own citizen identity and agency. 'A citizen's identity is an awareness of his relationship to his state and to his fellow citizens' (Heater 1990:185). It is argued that the way people see themselves as citizens has consequences for how they understand their rights and obligations, and for whether they are willing to act upon these, and in what form (Isin and Wood 1999). Hence the emphasis on the entangled relationship between identity and citizenship: a citizenship identity is constructed, continues to evolve, and is one of many identities held by actors (Isin and Wood 1999; Lister 2003). Existing inequalities and forms of exclusion in society affect the capacities of certain citizens to fulfil their citizenship. Differentiated mechanisms and institutions in society limit the possibilities available to particular groups or identities for participating in society and politics. Nyamjoh (2006) argues that there are 'hierarchies in citizenship', which implies there are differences in how certain groups of people or identities sense the quality of their citizenship, which may affect their behaviour as citizens. The category 'youth' as a social identity is a complicated one, as Section 1.2.1 shows. For the African context, scholarly work has indicated that many young citizens are placed lower in the hierarchy of citizenship in terms of having voice and influence (Honwana 2011).

An emerging body of literature discusses how citizenship evolves in conflict-affected societies (Pearce 2007; Pearce, McGee and Wheeler 2011; Oosterom 2014). It has been studied less in authoritarian regime settings, which is the context in which this study is located. Conflict studies have advanced in differentiating the various types of agency expressed by populations living in conflict areas. Much of this literature discusses people's agency in relation to security and survival. More recently, though, the more political forms of agency, disaplayed when people negotiate with public authority or powerful actors, have been highlighted.

Vigh (2006) uses the term 'social navigation' to describe how people try to shape their life trajectories in dynamic conflict environments. People are inventive, and relations and power continue to be configured in these settings. They assess their

environment and adjust themselves and their actions in response to it. Moser and Horn (2011) distinguish 'coping' from 'resolving' agency to highlight the difference between short-term actions for survival and agency aimed at addressing the causes of violence. Barter (2012) describes levels of agency, some of which can be considered 'more political' to the extent that citizens engage with or challenge the more powerful authorities (often armed actors) in their environment. Civilian populations may passively resist the presence of armed actors or they may openly confront them. They may also choose to collaborate with them to negotiate their security and access to resources and livelihoods.

These studies refer to situations where active conflict is taking place: dynamic contexts where violence may occur at any time and then wither away. The PVCA case study in South Sudan is an example of such a setting (Oosterom 2014). Here, citizens are constantly alert and have developed strategies to mitigate violence if it ever comes their way. Authoritarian regime settings are different from this. In some repressive regime environments the situation can be stable for a very long time. Political repression is constant, but not necessarily manifested in everyday physical violence. Regimes usually target dissenting voices in the political opposition and civil society using a range of tactics, from formal legislation that restricts freedom of association and speech to hidden tactics of intimidation, detainment and violence (Bhasin and Ghandi 2013). This variety of repressive strategies have been well documented for, for instance, Rwanda (Beswick 2010). To resist political repression on politically sensitive issues, such as national reconciliation, Rwandan citizens use 'weapon of the weak' tactics (Scott 1985) and 'hidden transcripts' (Scott 1990): they do not openly confront the regime, but through their discourses, gestures and civil disobedience they express their dissent (Thomson 2011). Despite the differences between dynamic conflict settings and relatively stable repressive regime environments, this study assumes that Zimbabwean citizens exercise agency in similar ways to citizens in conflict-ridden contexts: through social navigation of the structures of violence, risks and opportunities, always alert to their heavily politicised environment.

1.2 Youth

1.2.1 Youth as social identity

This study sees youth as an identity that is socially constructed and recognises that relations of power and control affects social notions of youth (Ukeje and Iwilade 2012). Existing literature has shown that the category 'youth' is a contested concept, which can refer to age as much as to a social and political identity. Many African countries use a wide age band to define who is a youth. The African Union Youth Charter defines youth as those aged 15 to 35, whereas UNICEF uses the age band 15 to 24 (Gupte, te Lintelo and Barnett 2014). In social sciences it is recognised that defining youth by age group is problematic. Youth is seen as a socially constructed category, because society has certain expectations of what adult roles and responsibilities entail (Abbink and Van Kessel 2005; De Boeck and Honwana 2005; Honwana 2011; Ukeje and Iwilade 2012). Marriage, starting a family, having your own home and a livelihood to support dependants are among the most commonly used milestones that mark the transition into adulthood. The

label 'youth' is used as a basis for the hierarchical organisation of families and communities (Chikwanha and Masunungure 2007). For his study on Zimbabwe Wilkins (2013) views youth as a *political* category: youth who themselves use the label 'youth' in the political sphere. Ukeje and Iwilade (2012) argue that the concept is never neutral but part of the struggle of youth to gain influence in society, *vis-à-vis* older generations that dominate the social and political institutions.

Seeing youth as a social construct means that it is historically situated and can therefore change (De Boeck and Honwana 2005). It also draws attention to the fact that the meaning and lived experience of being a youth varies significantly across social contexts, depending on how societies frame youth and configure their social roles (Ukeje and Iwilade 2012). Gupte *et al.* (2014) argue that a generic notion of 'youth' is valuable for generating baseline data and assessing progress; however, it risks overlooking the social differentiation within this broad category based on their social and economic backgrounds, whether they are rural or urban youth, male or female, or belong to younger or older youth cohorts. All these variables will matter for how they experience, for instance, their political environment.

It is argued that, in modern times, youth make the transition into adulthood at a much later age because of the increasing difficulties they face in achieving all the social and economic milestones that society and culture require them to meet (Honwana 2011; Sommers 2011). Many African young people are in a situation of 'waithood': waiting for adulthood (Singerman 2007). It is a state of 'prolonged delay' to entry into adulthood (Sommers 2011), or a state of limbo (Honwana 2011). The causes of 'waithood' have to do with the wider economic, political and cultural contexts in many countries of the global South. Youth between 15 and 24 years constitute 40 per cent of the workforce in African countries (World Bank 2012). They are disproportionately affected by unemployment, and when they do find work this is often in unfavourable working conditions (Gupte *et al.* 2014). Unemployment has social implications as it sustains a situation of 'waithood'. According to Sommers (2011) the cultural context and governance of a country strongly shape the prospects for youth. Depending on the prevailing cultural norms, young people face highly rigid norms about what adulthood entails and risk facing public humiliation as 'failed adults' (Sommers 2011). Governments have influence on how easy or difficult it is to achieve certain milestones that mark adulthood, for instance through policies on land ownership, housing and employment (Sommers and Uvin 2011).

Political marginalisation is a common concern among African youth (De Boeck and Honwana 2005): exclusion from formal political processes and local institutions where decision-making takes place, a denial of their voices, and a lack of respect from older generations. Often, young people are seen as 'people in the process of becoming rather than being' (Honwana 2005) and they are therefore not regarded as full and equal citizens. An Afrobarometer survey compared the political attitudes and behaviour of youth with those of older generations in 18 countries (Chikwanha and Masunungure 2007). It found high levels of support for democracy across age groups. However, young people are less satisfied with their countries' democracy and more pessimistic about the future of their regimes, and have less confidence and trust in important public institutions. Levels of participation in voting and other forms of political participation (e.g., attending meetings, raising issues) are lower among youth, youth are less partisan than adults and, although they are expected to protest more, the data do not show a generation gap with regard to participation

in street protests. A more recent survey in 19 of Africa's most democratic countries confirms lower levels of political participation (Resnick and Caale 2011): young people are less likely to vote, they question the legitimacy of electoral processes, and they manifest a lower level of partisanship. Also this study challenges the predominant idea that youth are more likely to protest. Dissatisfaction with the government's ability to create jobs is an important reason for youth to support opposition parties, whereas for non-youth, dissatisfaction with a broader range of issues is associated with partisanship.

1.2.2 Youth and violence

The relationship between youth and violence has become a popular theme in the study of African societies and politics. Much of the knowledge has been generated for countries affected by armed struggle and civil war, or for areas affected by high levels of violent crime. A repressive regime environment like that of Zimbabwe is different, but the debates on youth in relation to war violence and violent crime raise important issues for thinking about youth and political violence. This section highlights a number of the issues and reiterates the need to bring in youth perspectives.

In academic and policy circles an accepted proposition about youth in developing countries is that countries that have a 'youth bulge' (where youth form the majority of the population) risk experiencing instability and violence. This argument is backed up with statistical evidence that shows that most wars take place in 'young nations' (Leahy *et al.* 2007; Cincotta 2008). This argument gained credibility when, especially in the 1990s, youth seemed to be involved as the leaders of insurgencies and instigators of violence in Sierra Leone, Nigeria and Liberia, rather than as followers (Ukeje and Iwilade 2012). The 2011 World Development Report states that young males are the main perpetrators of violence and the victims in contexts of violent conflict, as well as outside civil war contexts in countries with high levels of violent crime (World Bank 2011). More recently, the uprisings in the Arab world are thought of as initiated and driven by young populations (Ezbawy 2012; Al-Momani 2011). The predominant idea is thus that large groups of unemployed, disgruntled youth are a risk to governments and stability. In response, governments may take measures that pre-empt youth insurgent actions. Nordås and Davenport (2013) find that governments facing a youth bulge are more repressive than other states.

The relationship between youth and violence has also been studied outside of war contexts, for instance in urban contexts and in countries with high levels of violent crime and youth gangs (Gupte *et al.* 2014; Kunkeler and Peters 2011; Jones and Rodgers 2009; WDR 2011). High levels of rural to urban migration, especially among youth, have led to the rapid expansion of African cities with young populations (Gupte *et al.* 2014; UN-Habitat 2014). Cities and slum areas in developing countries face high levels of violence, usually described as violent crime. For various reasons this violence is associated with youth.

The 2011 World Development Report (WDR) considers high levels of unemployment and idleness as the main causes of youth involvement in violence (World Bank 2011).The WDR presents survey data showing that also youth themselves mention unemployment and idleness as the main reasons for involvement in insurgent groups (39.5 per cent) and in gangs (46 per cent), while a

sense of security and ideological motives scored far less (World Bank 2011: 80). The 2011 WDR acknowledges that a lack of a sense of dignity and respect are also important drivers for involvement in violence, but it sees employment as the main starting point for acquiring a sense of dignity and status.

The assertion that countries with young populations are at risk of violence has invited criticism. Sommers (2011) warns against overreliance on correlational data, which may be valid correlations but cannot provide full explanations and they may obscure everyday realities of youth. He and other scholars also caution against the discourses that describe youth as an undifferentiated mass of security threats (Sommers 2011: 297). Sommers argues that many countries with young populations do not experience violent conflict and countries where wars have ended (Angola, Burundi, Liberia, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Rwanda) still have a youth bulge. Furthermore, discourses linking youth to violence portray young men as *inherently* violent, ignoring the social and political structures that cause violence, including forms of marginalisation and exclusion of youth (Richards 1997, 2002; Utas 2005), and ideal-type masculinities as constructed identities.

A number of studies show the complex relationship between youth, their social and political contexts, and forms of violence from a youth perspective. Rodgers (2009) shows that an important reason for joining gangs is the will to protect oneself and one's family when faced with increasing state violence and waning security. Youth have also been mobilised by political actors to form militias (Kunkeler and Peters 2011; Anderson 2002). In the case of Kenya, for example, various reasons for the existence of vigilante groups/gangs have been documented. Kenya has a long history of youth being mobilised as militant 'youth wingers' by minsters and politicians, which in the past were more clearly associated with pro-establishment leaders (Anderson 2002). Newer vigilante groups emerged from marginal communities and have a more complex relationship with politics. In Nairobi, rising crime figures, caused by urbanisation, and the failure of the police to address this increase in crime, led to a mushrooming of vigilante groups. Other authors emphasise that youth gangs have offered their members a sense of belonging, and access to services and employment, something the state was unable to do (Frederiksen 2010).

1.2.3 Agency in response to violence

An explanation for how youth express agency in relation to violence needs to be grounded in a more general understanding of the situation of youth. When young people live in violent environments, violence may not be their primary concern. They have to cope just as much with 'waithood' and everyday bread and butter issues. Young people undertake a range of activities to 'get by' and deal with life's challenges. As described above, these ordinary life challenges have a lot to do with the exclusion of youth from economic opportunities and formal politics. These conditions influence how youth respond to violence. It is important to restate that there is no single youth identity. Although young people may share the same experiences of exclusion, differences such as gender, social class and whether their background is urban or rural affect their agency, including agency in response to violence.

Young people develop a range of tactics in response to a lack of economic opportunities. Some choose to migrate in search of jobs or they become successful entrepreneurs in the informal economy (Honwana 2011). Some choose to engage in

intimate relationships with 'sugar daddies' and 'sugar mamas' in exchange for material benefits. In response to a sense of exclusion from the formal political arena, due to distrust of political institutions and political leaders, young people have found alternative spaces and niches in society where they express agency and craft their identities. New media technologies offer them ways to appropriate the public sphere, and also they may find popular culture more relevant than formal politics as a channel for expressing political views among themselves (Ukeje and Iwilade 2012).

Honwana (2005, 2011) refers to De Certau's (1984) distinction between tactics and strategies in everyday life. She argues that agency among youth is often 'tactic agency': focused on responding to immediate needs rather than 'strategic agency' aimed at achieving long-term goals. Some argue that the agency 'to get by' is also part of a political project to liberate the youth and fight paternalistic structures (Ukeje and Iwilade 2012). The question, again, is when agency expressed by youth can be considered a more political form of agency, or citizen agency.

In response to violence, then, Ukeje and Iwilade (2012) describe Murphy's (2003) four models that attempt to offer explanations for youth participation in violence, each with a different view on agency expressed by youth. The first is the 'coerced youth model' in which youth are forcefully conscripted in insurgent groups. The second is the 'revolutionary youth model' in which youth rebel against political and economic marginalisation. Participation in violence is thus deliberate. The third is the 'delinquent youth model' which refutes any ideological motivation of youth to engage in violence and depicts it as opportunistic and criminal. The fourth is the 'youth clientelism model' which emphasises how youth manage their dependency and agency by navigating patronage relationships.

Several authors have argued that many young people choose *not* to engage in violence when faced with life challenges such as unemployment and insecurity. They show they have the skills, agency and creativity to make the most of their situation and improve their lives (Sommers 2011; Honwana 2011) and simply 'try harder' (Utas 2005). Engagement in violence is carefully considered. Utas (2005) shows the complexity of women's roles, strategies and options that informed their responses to the Liberian civil war. Many young women decided to take part in the insurgency to avoid being harmed by violence, to run away from domestic violence at home, or to increase their life opportunities.

Section 1.2 described the concepts of citizenship, agency, youth identity, and violence. Since a citizen identity matters for citizen agency, it is important to unpack how young people see themselves as citizens and experience citizenship. The section emphasised that youth citizenship is about the relations between young citizens and the state and between youth and other citizens. Studies that bring in youth perspectives on violence show that identity, social relationships and political context, all matter for their responses to violence. Furthermore, studies show that there is too bit an emphasis on youth involvement in violence and that there is much to learn from how youth experience and respond to violence on an everyday basis. Taking these insights forward, this study shows how young Zimbabweans experience their citizenship. Section 1.3 describes the political context in which young people grow up as Zimbabwean citizens.

1.3 Political context of Zimbabwean youth

The history of the liberation struggle that led to the independence of Zimbabwe in 1980 and the subsequent development of the ZANU-PF government into an increasingly repressive regime have been documented in detail (Bratton 2014). This section highlights some of the most important developments and characteristics of this political environment, presenting the background against which agency among young Zimbabwean citizens must be understood. It will also describe how the position of youth in Zimbabwean society has been discussed in existing literature.

The political environment in Zimbabwe, but also the country's society in general, are often described as deeply polarised. There is a long history to this polarisation. During the long and bloody liberation struggle, from 1965, but more seriously from 1972, various insurgent groups had fought the colonial regime, but had at times also confronted one another. The Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) was the military wing of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), dominated by Shona groups. The Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) was the armed wing of the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), which was predominantly Ndebele. The Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) came out as the winner of elections in 1980. Tensions with ZAPU remained, leading to resistance against the ZANU-PF government in the southern region of Matabeleland. The ZANU-PF government responded with a violent campaign in Matabeleland from 1982 to 1987, known as *Gukurahundi* (Shona for 'the early rain which washes away the chaff before the spring rain). The government deployed the army's Fifth Brigade, which carried out widespread atrocities in the region. An estimated 20,000 people, mainly Ndebele, lost their lives. The violence ended after the Unity Accord in 1987, after which ZAPU was integrated into ZANU-PF.

In 1999 a new opposition party was formed under the leadership of Morgan Tsvangirai: the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), with roots in the labour movement. MDC posed the first real threat to ZANU-PF's hold on power (Masunungure 2004). In 2000 it effectively mobilised for a 'NO' vote in the referendum on the new constitution. MDC had the backing of the labour movement, which had a significant membership. It was able to speak to and mobilise grievances in the population. ZANU-PF, fearing the potential votes of commercial farmworkers, who were largely being excluded from the discussions about land reform, instituted violent commercial farm seizures when the proposed constitution was rejected. Commercial farmers, some of whom overtly supported the MDC, became a specific target since these farmers could potentially influence more than 300,000 farmworkers to support MDC. MDC presented itself as a 'young' movement and had linkages to the student movements. MDC was also strongly supported in Matabeleland, owing to Gukurahundi and the political and economic marginalisation of the region. MDC won 47 per cent of the votes in the 2000 parliamentary elections and it had even won support in rural areas in Mashonaland, which are associated with ZANU-PF. It also removed ZANU PF's ability to alter the constitution, since it no longer possessed a two-thirds majority.

ZANU-PF stepped up its repression of the political opposition and civil society actors, which it associated with MDC. State violence and intimidation, in particular

in the election periods, furthered the polarisation in society and deepened divisions along party lines. The elections in 2002, and to a lesser extent those in 2005, were accompanied by political violence. MDC split in 2005, when factions could not agree on whether to participate in the 2005 elections for the Senate, helping ZANU-PF back to a two-thirds majority. Morgan Tsvangirai continued with the Movement for Democratic Change – Tsvangirai (MDC-T) and Welshman Ncube and Arthur Mutambara led the breakaway faction.

There was more political space for the opposition around the March 2008 elections, which were won by MDC-T; Mutambara's faction also won seats. After Tsvangirai won a majority in the presidential election in May (47.9 per cent while Mugabe won 43.2 per cent), requiring a presidential run-off in June, ZANU-PF mobilised the security apparatus, war veterans and youth militias to launch an extremely violent campaign against MDC supporters and civilians. ZANU-PF 'base camps' were established in many locations, used as torture camps where physical and sexual violence was perpetrated. An estimated 200 MDC activists were killed and thousands of people were tortured (Freedom House 2012). Tsvangirai withdrew from the presidential run-off and Mugabe won, unopposed.

The international community now responded, as violence continued after the elections. With involvement of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and particularly of South African President Thabo Mbeki, a Global Political Agreement (GPA) was brokered in September 2008 and a Government of National Unity (GNU) was formed. It was to be an uneasy coalition government under President Mugabe and Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai. State reform was part of the GPA and, much delayed, a new constitution was adopted in 2013. ZANU-PF used these years to undermine the GNU, to consolidate its party structures and strengthen its networks, to sow division within the political opposition and make it look weak and incapable of governing (Kriger 2012). It took time to prepare for the 2013 elections, whereas MDC-T seemed to neglect the necessary groundwork for preparing and expanding its constituencies (Moore 2013). ZANU-PF won the 2013 elections with a strongly disputed landslide victory, forming a vast majority in parliament.

A *system* of intimidation and repression is characteristic of an authoritarian regime like Zimbabwe. To a certain extent ZANU-PF inherited the systems used to control a population and suppress dissenting voices from the colonial regime. It used these to consolidate its powers and continued to develop state institutions and state-sponsored entities for this purpose. The civil service expanded from 62,000 personnel in 1980 to 181,402 in 1989, which allowed ZANU-PF to influence entry to and promotion within the civil service (McGregor 2002). The state security agents, notably the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) and the Zimbabwe Republic Police, form a sophisticated system of surveillance repression from the highest political level to the very local level. When large numbers of ZANLA war veterans started to demand compensation for their role in the independence struggle in the late 1990s, this was a possible threat to ZANU-PF's power. Bowing to the demands of the war veterans, Mugabe granted them a huge unbudgeted award, and this immediately led to the collapse of the Zimbabwe dollar. Together with the costs of military involvement in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the economy begun to slide, and inflation triggered food riots in 1998. This was now palpable dissent and rejection of ZANU-PF.

However, Mugabe's decision to placate the war veterans created a cadre of non-state activists loyal to the regime, which could be used to intimidate and control the population. Many of these self-defined 'war veterans' were clearly too young to have participated in the Liberation War, but it was they who took the front role in land invasions and election mobilising (Sachikonye 2011).

In this context, ZANU-PF sees youth as a potential opposition force as well as a category of people that can be mobilised for its own interests. The role of youth in state violence has expanded since 2000 (Dzmiri 2014), but needs to be seen against the background of a long history of conquest and struggles in which the link between power and capital accumulation has been forged by violence (Moore 2013). The youth militias formed in 2000 were at the forefront of the land invasions and again mobilised for election violence. Youth groups such as *Chipangano* in Mbare, *Upfumi Kuvadiki* in Epworth and *AlShabab* in Kwekwe seek to mobilise support for ZANU-PF, and threaten MDC supporters. Knowing that grievances simmering among youth in the 1990s had helped to trigger the food riots and demonstrations from 1996 to 1999, the government created the Ministry of Youth and Development and Employment Creation in 2000, as well as the National Youth Service (NYS). The NYS is a programme that was meant to teach vocational skills and instil a sense of patriotism to raise young people as 'good Zimbabweans'. The programme was transformed into a large-scale paramilitary training programme (Dzmiri 2014). The government uses it to give any kind of civil service job to NYS graduates, excluding those who did not enrol. NYS graduates (also named 'Border Gezi youth', or 'green bombers', named after the founder, the politician Border Gezi) have been used to force people to attend ZANU-PF meetings and rallies during campaigns, and they have also perpetrated violence.

In general the violence has been much more pronounced in the rural areas of Zimbabwe and, in the rural areas, considerably worse in some provinces than others. For example, the three Mashonaland Provinces have recorded the highest number of violent incidents, while the number has been much lower in the two Matabeleland Provinces (CSVR 2009). This is not exclusively the case though, and Harare and its environs have seen very high levels of violence, and youth militias and ZANU-PF youth have been increasingly active in the urban areas.

Young people have also expressed resistance to the regime. Hodgkinson (2013) notes that the role of student movements in organising nationwide demonstrations had acted as a catalyst in spurring other civil society groups into action in the 1990s. Young people have used popular culture like the 'Urban Grooves' music genre to express their views on society, using lyrics that reflect the language of the oppressed to protest against their exclusion from mainstream politics (Mate 2012).

For opposition political parties, and youth supporting these, being actively political in rural areas has been highly risky and, to a certain extent, the youth have borne the brunt of the violence. But it has also been the case that youth from the opposition have also become increasingly violent, with both inter- and intra-party violence being reported. In fact, one of the publicly expressed reasons for the split in MDC in 2005 was the failure of Tsvangirai to address violence by party youths.

2 Research process

2.1 Research process

The research was carried out in two regions: Mashonaland and Matabeleland. In both regions three research sites were selected. In Matabeleland case studies included Magwegwe (urban suburb of Bulawayo), Rangemore (peri-urban area) and Thsolotsho (rural area). In Mashonaland case studies included Kuwadzana (urban suburb of Harare), Goromonzo (peri-urban area) and Murewah (rural area). In all sites the research team met three times with groups of young people over a period of 15 months. The political situation was too sensitive to go out to the research sites for Phase 1 and part of Phase 2, because of the election period and the aftermath. Instead, participants came to town to work with the team. Field visits were made for Phase 2 Matabeleland and for Phase 3 in both regions, with the exception of Thsolotsho, this being always a politically sensitive area.

The research team consisted of the IDS researcher, two researchers from RAU, and two facilitators from two community-based organisations (CBOs): Tree of Life (TOL, Harare) and Grace to Heal (GTH, Bulawayo). Both organisations have been long-term partners of RAU. TOL works on trauma healing for individuals and communities who are victims of political violence. GTH implements a range of reconciliation and healing activities for the same target group, and organises Peace Clubs for youth.

In each research location the team worked with 20 young people divided in groups of 5 and worked with each group for a full day in each phase, with girls and boys in separate focus groups. The sample included an equal number of boys and girls. The participants were identified by community facilitators affiliated with TOL and GTH. Several of our participants had participated in GTH or TOL activities, but the majority had not. The CBO facilitators had invited some of the youth they knew to participate and asked them to bring friends. This created a bias towards youth that had been exposed to CBO activities, as well as a bias towards youth who had experienced political violence – since that is the target group of the CBOs. Findings need to be understood in this light. This sampling strategy enabled a level of trust in the process, because both CBOs are trusted by young people and their parents for staying outside of party politics. Moreover, many of the young people already knew each other. This was very important in the context of Zimbabwe, where people are reluctant to speak about certain issues in public because of an awareness of state surveillance that happens at the very local level.

The profile of the participants gives an overall picture of their educational and employment status: all of them had completed primary education and 45 per cent had completed secondary education (this percentage was lower in rural Murewah and Tsholotsho), although only few pupils achieve 5 ‘O’ level passes. Only 4 per cent had completed post-secondary education. In terms of employment, 95 per cent were unemployed, 65 per cent were self-employed in the informal sector, and 5 per cent had a formal job.

The team initially envisaged meeting the same young people on each occasion, in order to build a rapport. This was not feasible, however, because some could not

attend each session because tjeu were engaged in seasonal labour or casual work, or (particularly in Matabeleland) they had temporarily migrated to South Africa to look for work. The majority of the young people participated in all three phases, but a number of them were replaced by others in Phase 2 and/or 3.

2.2 Research locations

This section provides the contextual background of each of the six locations, using existing sources where possible, complemented with what participants told the team about their home area.

2.2.1 Research sites in Matabeleland

Tsholotsho

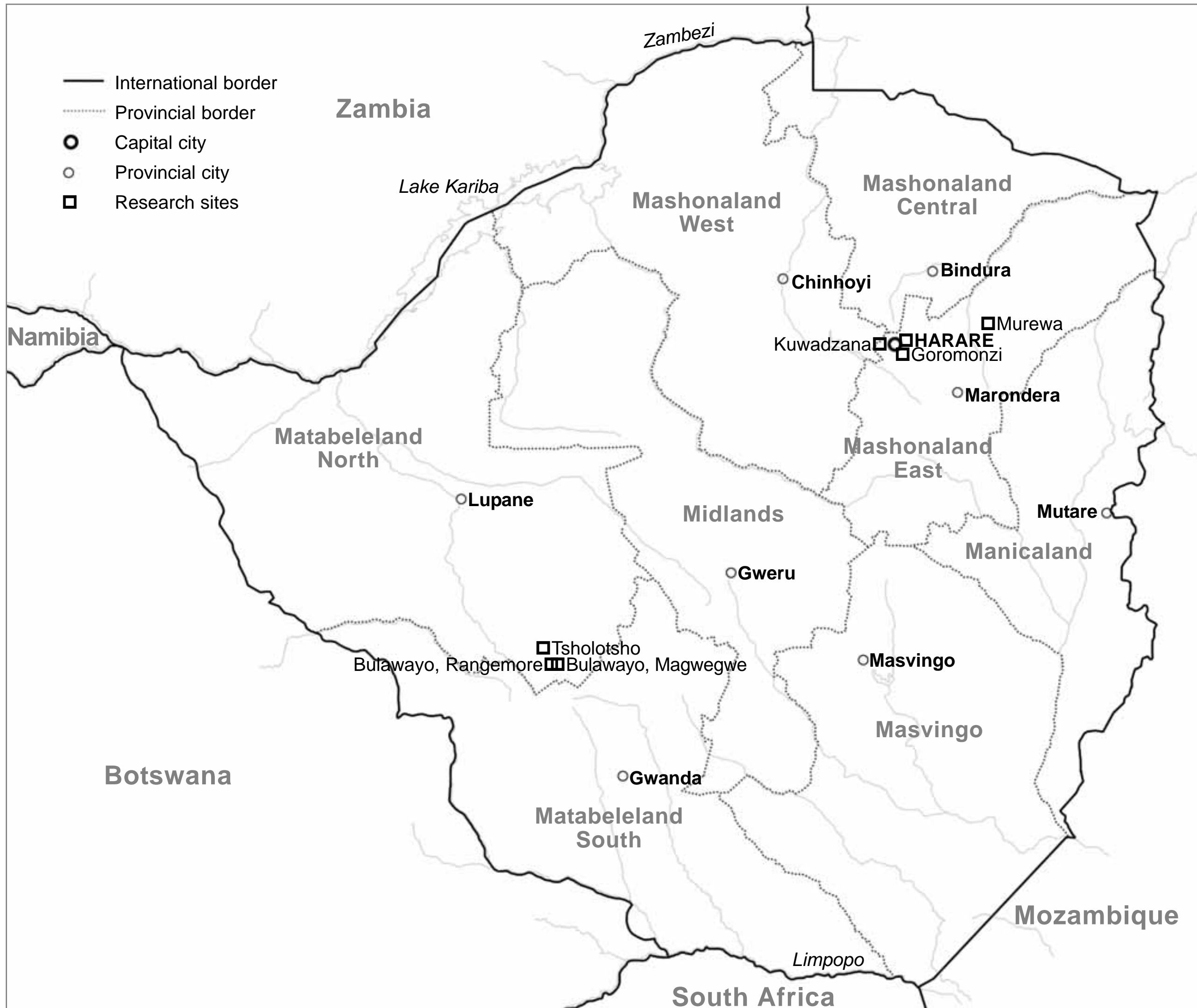
Thsolotsho is a rural area in Matebeland, bordering South Africa (see map). It is one of the areas that was heavily affected by Gukurahundi between 1983 and 1987. The population of Matebeland generally supports MDC, and so does the Tsholotho population. As in other parts of Matabeleland, economic marginalisation and high levels of unemployment havd motivated many people, including the youth, to try their luck in South Africa. However, life in South Africa is not necessarily better and many end up in the informal economy or engage in criminal activities.

Rangemore

Rangemore is a peri-urban, low-density area located 25km from Bulawayo city centre along the Bulawayo Plumtree road. Rangemore used to be a coloured community belonging to the socioeconomic middle class, who worked in Bulawayo city. After 1980 black Zimbabweans bought plots from the coloured population (Dube and Chirisa 2013) and the coloured population resettled in the Bulawayo suburbs. The new residents used the reasonably large plots for gardening and fresh farm produce to sell in Bulawayo markets. As it is an MDC support area near Bulawayo and a low-density area, ZANU-PF has less interest in maintaining control over it. Participants reported that party activities happened only around election time. Because of the stories they had heard about other places they were afraid of political intimidation, but had less direct experience of it. In between elections they mainly experienced party politics through the distribution of farming inputs along party lines.

The youth also suspected that the ongoing process of land subdivision was politicised. Many of the current landholders in Upper Rangemore are under pressure to sell their land, because of the government's plan to find space for the growing urban population in the Bulawayo-Umguza peri-urban area (Dube and Chirisa 2013). Upper Rangemore comes under the Umguza Rural District Council. Our youth participants interpreted the land subdivision process as a struggle over territorial boundaries between Bulawayo City Council and the bordering Umguza Rural District Council, both claiming Rangemore. Dube and Chirisa (2013) explain that the Umguza district council is worried about losing revenue when selling land in Rangemore. But in the view of the youth, the ZANU-PF wanted to curb the

Map of Zimbabwe showing research sites



Source: Redrawn from Ezilon Maps.

influence of the MDC by parcelling out land in Rangemore and selling it to people who affiliated to ZANU-PF. At the time of research, land subdivision was ongoing. Many original residents had sold parts of their land to 'investors'. The issue had created animosity among residents, as some resisted the selling of land. Those who sold claimed they needed the money and stated they did not have the resources, irrigation and tools for profitable farming. Others insisted that all land belongs to the original inhabitants. Our participants were concerned about their parents selling the land, because this reduced their future livelihood opportunities, but felt they had little influence over the process. As a result of the ongoing land subdivisions many new people had migrated into Rangemore. Youth commented there was no 'unity' in the area. They furthermore felt that Rangemore was neglected by the government. The local councillor does not live in the area and people have little access to government officials. There is no secondary school and therefore pupils have to commute. The young people described the place as lacking entertainment and for the boys alcohol consumption at the local bar is their main activity.

Magwegwe

Magwegwe is a high-density suburb in Bulawayo and an MDC support area. Magwegwe has a community centre where various courses are run and some young people organise activities. It also has a public library. Support for MDC is so high in Bulawayo, that ZANU-PF is not as aggressive as in, for instance, certain urban areas in Mashonaland.

2.2.2 Research sites in Mashonaland

Murewah

Murewah is a rural area near Zimbabwe's eastern border. It was a heavily contested area during Zimbabwe's liberation struggle and it was also affected by the civil war in Mozambique, when Renamo rebels came hiding in the area, particularly Murewah North, and harassed the population for supplies. It has always been a ZANU-PF support area. In the 2002 elections there was a lot of violence in the area. Operation Murambatsvina in May 2005 (International Crisis Group 2005) led to groups of displaced people from the towns arriving in Murewah, many of them MDC supporters. The operation itself may also have persuaded Murewah residents to start supporting MDC (Bratton and Masunungure 2006). Increased support for MDC fuelled tensions in Murewah and violence was widespread during the 2008 elections. Senatorial candidate Shepherd Jani was a prominent MDC-T member known for protecting MDC supporters in the area. Shortly before the presidential run-off in the 2008 elections he was abducted by suspected CIO agents. His mutilated body was found a few days later in Goromonzi.[1] According to key informants this weakened the MDC structures in Murewah. In 2013 there was less violence, but the young people reported forms of intimidation, described below.

Goromonzi

Goromonzi is a peri-urban, low-density district 40km south-east of Harare in Mashonaland East. It is a politically important district, and several prominent politicians and ministers went to Goromonzi High School. The prison at the Goromonzi police station is believed to have an underground prison area, constructed by the colonial regime, which has been used by ZANU-PF to detain and torture prominent opposition members in the past. In the early 2000s fast-track land reforms were implemented in Goromonzi (Marongwe 2011; Murisa 2011). Marongwe (2011) shows that the institutions responsible for the implementation were captured by ZANU-PF members and members of the state security apparatus. As a result, large farms were allocated to war veterans, prominent party members and local elites (Marongwe 2011). At present, land subdivisions are continuing, as part of the plan to urbanise Goromonzi as the city of Harare is expanding. Participants stated that land subdivision was a major concern among

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1 This incident was reported by Amnesty International on 4 June 2008 at www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/news/sharp-crackdown-political-opponents-zimbabwe-20080604 as well as on Zimbabwean news sites; see *The Zimbabwean*, 25 May 2008 at www.thezimbabwean.co/news/12952/mdc-leader-shepherd-jani-murdered-mutilated-body-dumped-in-goromonzi.html

residents, who feared they would not be adequately compensated for their land, or that they would be evicted. Young people claimed the process was politicised as plots of land were sold to, or taken by, prominent members of ZANU-PF. A residents' association, Simukai, was trying to monitor whether the process of land subdivision followed due process and it pursued certain cases in court where they felt residents were disadvantaged. The association had started a 'youth chapter' to encourage young people to start income-generating activities.

The (Jesuit) Catholic church has a strong influence in the governance and politics of the district. Jesuit missionaries owned all the title deeds of the land in Chishawasha, an area within Goromonzi. The church therefore still controls the land where residents live and farm, and presides over many community affairs. There are many missionary schools and clinics in the area, so the Jesuits are a source of employment for many people. The participants claimed that even traditional leaders follow the instructions of the Jesuits. The head of the Jesuits in Goromonzi is Father Fidelis Mukonori, a senior figure in the Jesuit Order and Chaplain to President Mugabe. The participants claimed that Father Mukonori has a close relationship with the regime and would not tolerate support for the opposition.

Kuwadzana

Kuwadzana is a high-density suburb of Harare. MDC has held the parliamentary seat since 2000, but there is also support for ZANU-PF in the area. The first MDC member of parliament was Learnmore Jongwe, a student leader at the University of Zimbabwe. He died in prison in October 2004 in suspicious circumstances, charged with the murder of his wife. The next MDC MP was Nelson Chemisa, also a young and inspirational figure for many young people; he was Minister of Information and Communications Technology in the Government of National Unity and is now serving his second term as MP. Kuwadzana has a large population descending from immigrants from Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia, and from other parts of Zimbabwe. The young people stated this had never led to any social problems. They said there is generally a sense of unity in Kuwadzana, but there are divisions between ZANU-PF and MDC supporters.

2.3 Research methodology

Phase 1 (May/August 2013) focused on the forms of agency among youth in response to the types of violence and intimidation they experienced in everyday life. In Matabeleland this phase was carried out shortly before the July 2013 elections and in Mashonaland shortly after. Phase 2 (November 2013/January 2014) looked at the life histories of individual young people and at what currently informs their citizen engagement. Phase 2 also examined the conditions in which youth feels empowered or disempowered and which spaces they consider 'safe'. Phase 3 (May 2014/August 2014) looked at how the youth live their everyday life and explored their perceptions on a variety of issues: youth as a social identity in society, ethnicity, job and education opportunities for youth, and expectations of the new government. The following sub-sections describe the sets of methods used in each phase.

Phase 1: forms of agency and types of violence

The team carried out a range of participatory methods in all focus groups, which were adapted from: Moser and McIlwaine's (2004) participatory appraisal methodology for researching violence in urban contexts; Moser and Brown's (2012) study methodology for the study of violence chains; and methods for analysing power relations documented in the Carnegie Handbook of Power Analysis (Hunjan and Pettit 2011). The exercises included listing and scoring types of violence; causal flow diagrams; actor and institutional mappings; and visual exercises exploring agency in relation to the self, peers and the community when violence occurs. During the exercises the team used topic guides to ask questions about the nature and frequency of violence experienced and by whom it was perpetrated. They then asked questions about the impact that the violence had on the youth, noting differences for girls and boys. Concerning agency, questions were asked about responses to the violence itself and the young people's behaviour towards the perpetrators.

Phase 2: growing up as young citizens

Anchor point for this theme were the River of Life drawings: a visual exercises whereby young people individually draw their lives as a flowing river, with elements in and around the river representing important events, people, and traits. The question to prompt the drawing was 'Can you depict your life as a river, showing us everything that was important for how you became the person you are now'. After the drawing was completed a second prompt asked 'Which of these elements have influenced you in who you are *as a citizen* of Zimbabwe – and you are free to add to your drawing if you wish'. These drawings were followed up with individual semi-structured interviews in a private setting, whereby the team could pursue certain themes from the drawing and link the drawing to present ideas and behaviour about agency in the political context. In another drawing exercise, participants created three drawings that were then discussed in focus groups. They had three prompts: (1) can you draw a situation in which you felt empowered; (2) can you draw a situation in which you felt disempowered; (3) can you draw a safe space. 'Safe space' was explained as a place where youth can get together and interact freely and talk about anything.

Phase 3: everyday life and perceptions

In this phase the team carried out more conventional focus group discussions, using a topic guide with questions about how the youth spend their time, livelihoods of their families, and their views on a range of issues that concern youth. In one drawing exercise the young people made a cartoon drawing about one ordinary day in their lives, from morning to evening. In a second drawing exercise they depicted a fictional story about young people addressing any kind of problem in the community, which then prompted a discussion about agency. The next day the team carried out a community walk with the participants, asking them to show them around the area and all the places where the youth hung out – or avoided. Detailed notes from the walks complemented the data from the focus group on the previous day, giving a full picture about everyday life of young people.

2.4 Caveats

The purpose of this report is to describe the situation of Zimbabwean youth from their own perspective. This is important, because youth are targeted by certain political actors. This study therefore did not include methodologies to compare youth perspectives and behaviours with those of adults. Some of our findings will not apply to youth alone. For instance, adults face similar forms of economic and political exclusion as those described by the youth. More research is needed to explain how mechanisms of exclusion are different for youth and adults, and how patterns of engagement in politics and political violence vary across generations.

Because of the way in which the participants were identified, this report cannot claim to have included all sub-identities within the social category of youth. First, it is likely that really marginalised youth were not part of the sample – for example, those engaged in crime, drinking on the streets, and from the poorest families. The relationship between these types of young people, politics and violence needs further research. Second, it is noteworthy that very few of our participants admitted they had voluntarily participated in election violence out of material interest, which is interesting, since unemployment is considered a driver for youth involvement in political violence. This may reflect a bias in our sample: the selection process of participants failed to include youth who engage purely for material gain. It may be caused by the methodology: only one individual interview per participant may be insufficient for such sensitive issues to come up. Further research is needed to investigate the social backgrounds and motivations of those young people who become 'party youth' during elections and join in the violence.

2.5 Research ethics and risks

In a context like Zimbabwe, it is important that participants feel free to speak their mind without any anxiety over possible repercussions from their involvement in the process. At the start of each session, the research team explained that all information was treated confidentially. A 'social contract' was agreed among participants about respecting each other's opinions and not sharing information with anyone outside the group. In none of our sessions were any outsiders or individuals representing public authorities present. We selected venues for our sessions that allowed a confidential set-up. Names of our participants were stored separately from the transcripts. The report has avoided linking events to individuals, and the real names of participants are never used.

3 Youth perspectives on youth identity and violence

A lively conversation is taking place in the corner of a community centre in one of Bulawayo's suburbs. A group of five young men in their early twenties sit in a circle, chatting. Laughter erupts when they list the nicknames the parents and elders in their neighbourhood use for them – all derogatory terms that describe the young men as stubborn and idle. 'Olova', for instance, meaning 'all over', refers to the youth who are hanging about all over the place, having nothing to do but to

make trouble. They joke, but then get serious. True, many of them have no jobs and are ‘all over’ on the streets. They also acknowledge that some young people get into trouble. However, labelling youth as the actual cause of the trouble masks the structural reasons for the challenges they face.

This section describes the background of the youth who were our participants and how they view themselves as citizens of Zimbabwe. The section starts with a description of their living conditions and lifestyles. As the research process revealed that forms of structural violence were considered serious problems in everyday life, the subsequent section explains how youth experience structural violence in the economic, political and social domain.

3.1 Who are ‘the youth’ and what are their lives like?

The majority of our participants lived with parents or one parent, or relatives. A few lived on their own. Especially in Matabeleland, both parents could be in South Africa, and in these cases the young people stayed either on their own, taking care of siblings, or with relatives. Many of the participants had lost a parent at a young age. As a consequence, they lived with uncles and aunts, or with the remaining parent who in many cases had found a new partner. Boys highlighted the fact that families breaking up particularly affects their education and welfare. Not living with parents creates uncertainty about whether relatives are willing to pay for education. Girls emphasised the difficult relationships with the relatives they were living with. There were many stories of participants who did not get along with their step-parents and had therefore left home, and of girls who were sexually harassed by step-fathers or relatives. Clearly, not living with parents was experienced as a risk to their wellbeing.

Many Ndebele participants had dropped out of school before completing their ‘A’ levels. Many reported that parents were unable to pay their school fees or exam fees. Often a divorce or the illness or death of a parent had meant there was not enough money for them to go to school, and young people living with relatives were not always supported to pursue their education. Several of the participants dropped out of school in about 2008, when the election turbulence had economic implications for their families. A number of schools closed and of the students who would have been sitting their exams that year, not all were able to sit them the following year, and thus they missed out on obtaining O-level or A-level certificates.

Households had various sources of income. Sometimes one parent worked, and many parents worked in the informal economy. The mothers worked as vendors in town, sold vegetables from home, reared chickens, did tailoring. In rural areas, parents cultivated a plot of land. Many of the young people had one parent or a relative in towns in Zimbabwe or in South Africa, who sent money home. A few had a parent or uncle and aunt in the United Kingdom. We found that parents or siblings who sent remittances wanted the money to be used mainly for the education of their family members. Young people with younger siblings at school would therefore receive little of the extra cash.

The majority of our participants were unemployed. With a lack of jobs and few education opportunities, how did they spend their time? The findings show that our young participants were far from ‘idle’: they were trying hard to make the best of

life and were sometimes able to make some improvements in their lives. They revealed some of the structural causes of their marginalisation, and the range of tactics used to navigate these conditions. Younger participants who were not in school usually had little to do and depended on parents or relatives to provide for them, whereas the older ones were active in the informal economy – although often not permanently – and contributed to their households. Common income-generating activities among boys are buying and selling mobile phones and cards, working as mechanics or in construction, selling firewood, and moulding bricks. Those who had had some training in a craft , such as carpentry, would try to use their skills to earn money as often as possible. In Tsholotsho (Matabeleland), boys who played in the better soccer teams (the number one leisure activity for boys) made some money when they played in tournaments. Some tried to start up their own businesses, such as a food stall:

> **[P1]** Due to unemployment, me and my friend we started a small shop a month and a half ago. We sell chips and Russian sausages. We started the shop because we want to avoid committing crime and if you are unemployed, many things that happen in your community, there is violence. They point fingers at us, that you guys are guilty because you spend your time doing nothing. So I want to show the people that we try to do something. I was once arrested for something I didn't do. It was said that I stole someone's phone. I was in prison for three weeks. I noticed that if you employ yourself, there are no jobs here. We decided to employ ourselves. A brother of ours who is in South Africa brought us the machines and gave us some start-up capital. The shop is not legal [all five boys laugh].
>
> **[P2 comments]** Most things the youth do are illegal.
>
> **[P1]** But it is legal to us in the community! Because it is acknowledged by the community. The police come and buy our things! It's legal. I work with my brother and a friend. We have paid back our loan, so we are now making profit. My brother has gone to SA yesterday to buy a bigger machine for frying.
>
> **[P3]** My mum trades currency. Money changing is illegal. But it's ok because of the current situation Zimbabwe, since there are no jobs and people are struggling. It's wrong but there is nobody who does something right. If they arrest my mum, she simply pays the police a bribe and they let her go. They tolerate it. And the police also want to benefit from it at the end of the day. It is helping one another. The people who come to exchange help others. The police benefits from it, because they get two or three dollars, and everyone is happy.[2]

Also in Mashonaland, the youth felt that the economic situation justified their activities in the informal economy. Many of them knew exactly how to navigate the corruption in the police force to maintain their activities. The fact that the government is unable to improve the economic situation for youth, whereas it also may use force to stop the informal economy activities they need to make a living, had further alienated the youth from the state.

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2 Focus group boys, Magwegwe, 21 May 2014.

There were also the criminal activities. The boys referred to illegal trade in marijuana and other substances, in which the police are silent partners and receive bribes.

> This [lack of opportunities] has led the youths going to South Africa where they start a life of crime in order to survive, and they come and sell the stuff this side. The young boys from Tsholotsho never complete their education because they would be thinking of going to South Africa. For them to survive there they hijack and rob people, therefore it becomes hard for them to come back. The only time they come back to Zimbabwe is when they would have committed a very big crime in South Africa. We have such friends who come here and they tell us their stories of the lives they live in South Africa and we can tell that they are people of a violent nature.[3]

The girls spend much of their time around the house doing chores: fetching water, cleaning, cooking and taking care of children, siblings and grandparents. The girls described their days as busy, getting up and starting the list of chores. They would go out to shops or a centre to see friends, perhaps try for jobs. They said they stayed at home in the evenings, because after dark it is often not safe to be out.

Girls and boys mentioned that some girls engaged in prostitution, but also in ‘girlfriending’ or in relationships with ‘sugar daddies’ as tactics to have access to cash. During the community walks in Magwegwe (Matabeleland), participants singled out young teenage girls who were hanging around the beer hall, allegedly soliciting. One of them was clearly pregnant. In Thsolotsho, boys and girls talked about how girls may choose to have a relationship early and with a young man from a specific group:

> Parents even allow their children to go to South Africa when they finish their Grade 7! Young girls fall pregnant at an early age. […] Parents are now so relaxed. When a girl reaches Grade 7 they stop going to school and prefer to get married to guys who come from South Africa. The parents have grown to accept that as the way of life.[4]

There were not many opportunities for leisure. Where facilities existed (like community centres, youth centres and public libraries), young people did use them, but this depended on the kind of activities run, the nature of the facility’s management, the perceived safety and neutrality of the facility, and the area where it was located. The community centre in Magwegwe, for instance, was used by a youth dance group and a few sports groups. The youth ward officer had initiated a bag-potato project[5] for the youth at the compound, which was actively used. But the centre had had a bad reputation in the past, when young people had organised parties that ended up in fights with youths from a neighbouring community. For that reason, many parents forbade their daughters to go there. The public library in Magwegwe is located opposite the police station. Though the young people considered the library to be a useful facility, the girls avoided the place in order not

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3 Focus group boys, Thsolotsho, 19 May 2014.

4 Focus group boys, Thsolotsho, 18 May 2014.

5 An income-generating project. Potatoes are not cultivated on land, which requires access to land, but are instead grown in plastic bags. The participants sell the potatoes at the local market.

to be harassed by police. The vibrant youth centre in neighbouring Lobengola hosted a number of thriving youth groups, including an arts group that had attracted external funding. The manager enjoyed a great deal of respect among the youth and had helped many groups to be set up. In Rangemore, where no public centre exists, the only 'hang-outs' are the beer hall, shops and bar where you can play pool. The boys hang out at these places, but the girls stay away from them – apart from the girls who are looking for boyfriends.

3.2 Types of violence in our research sites

This section presents the types of violence that our participants highlighted for their home areas, emphasising the differences for boys and girls where relevant. The six research sites included in the study are not representative in terms of all possible variations in the kind of violence experienced, or of their intensity, and the actors who perpetrate them.

Ranking exercises for the types of violence experienced showed two patterns across sites. First of all, experiences of political violence and intimidation emerged strongly in all the research sites, but were emphasised more by the boys than the girls. Girls included many other forms of violence in their rankings. In everyday life, girls experience various kinds of violence against women, ranging from domestic violence to forced early marriages. A second pattern observed from the rankings and subsequent discussions was that intimidation and surveillance is permanent, but that physical violence that is politically motivated only peaks around the time of elections. Therefore, in between elections other forms of violence are considered more serious in everyday life, such as crime, alcohol and drug abuse, fights in the community, domestic violence, and forms of structural violence. The ranking of types of violence per location are presented in Table 3.1 (boys) and Table 3.2 (girls).

Violent crime

Violent crime characterises many of the poorer high-density areas in Zimbabwe. It was not surprising that this type of violence scored high among boys and girls in Kuwadzana (Harare) and Magwegwe (Bulawayo). Youth from Kuwadzana talked about drug-related crime, and fights around the beer halls. Participants said many young people do not finish school and this has led to a few gangs being formed in the area. Also youth from Magwegwe reported problems associated with drug and alcohol abuse and talked about the high levels of crime in their neighbourhood. Young people reported that crime rates had gone up in their area after prisoners were given a presidential pardon in February 2014.[6] In Magwegwe the police enforce an informal curfew from 7pm, which has negative impacts on shops, vendors and businesses in general. Young males especially are harshly treated when caught by the police after 7pm. The boys recalled one incident when a boy was standing by his gate after 7pm. He ran into his house when the police passed by, but the police followed him into the house, arrested him and took him to the

6 President Mugabe pardoned 2,000 prisoners, mostly women and juveniles, in February 2014 to decongest the overcrowded prisons in the country. Source: 'Zimbabwe's Mugabe pardons 2,000 Prisoners', CapitalFM, 17 February 2014.

Table 3.1 Types of violence ranked by the boys, per location

	Mashonaland			Matebeleland		
	Kuwadzana	**Goromonzi**	**Murewah**	**Magwegwe**	**Rangemore**	**Thsolotsho**
Site characteristics	• Urban Harare, high-density MDC-T constituency.	• Peri-urban, low-density area marked for urbanisation and land division. • Experiences of land grab. • Strong Jesuit Order.	• Rural area. • ZANU-PF constituency. • MDC-T support increased after 2005, leading to tensions.	• Urban Bulawayo, high-density. • MDC-T constituency.	• Peri-urban, low-density. • Area marked for land subdivision and urbanisation. • Many migrants, low social cohesion.	• Rural area. • Severely affected by Gukurahundi.
Named actors that perpetrate violence	• ZANU-PF Party supporters • Police • Political leaders • War veterans • CIOs • Youths • Soldiers • Traditional leaders • Individuals	• Police • MPs • Traditional leaders • ZANU-PF youth • Soldiers • War veterans • Political parties • Traditional leaders • Councillors	• Headmen Party leaders • War veterans and war collaborators • Party youth and supporters • National Youth Service graduates	• Unemployed youths • Corrupt police • Drug dealers • Party supporters • Irresponsible parents • Irresponsible beer-sellers • Political leaders • Unemployed people • Drug dealers • Police officers • Some parents • Drug users • War veterans	• ZANU-PF Party supporters • Local leaders, councillors • Youths • Individuals • Umguza Rural District Council • Landowners • Neighbourhood police • War veterans • Bulawayo City Council	• CIOs • Teachers • Party supporters • Parents • Traditional leaders • War veterans and party youth
Forms of violence in order of priority	• Political violence* • Threats* • Forced attendance* • Public violence • Assaults • Property destruction* • Rape and robbery • Verbal abuse • Intimidation, fear* • Sexual abuse • Murder, kidnapping • Domestic violence • Physical violence	• Intimidation* • Political violence* • Land grab* • Murder, crime • Verbal abuse • Physical violence and disputes • Intimidation of MDC supporters during grain distribution* • War veterans appropriate fertilisers*	• Exclusion from farming inputs based on party membership* • Abusive councillors and headmen* • Political violence* • Intimidation*	• Political violence* • Crime • Tribalism by police* • Public fighting • Religious conflict • Verbal abuse • Child abuse • Fights over girls • Fear* • Verbal abuse • Harassment* • Sexual abuse • Intimidation* • Parental abuse	• Physical violence • Emotional abuse • Intimidation • Domestic violence • Threats* • Verbal abuse • Political violence* • Tribalism • Rape • Bullying • Harassment	• Abuse by police • Intimidation* • Bullying • Rape • Human rights abuse • Harassment of youth* • Tribalism • Discrimination • Physical violence and discrimination against women • Child abuse • Cultural violence • Crime/murder

* indicates types of violence labelled political violence.

Table 3.2 Types of violence ranked by the girls, per location

	Mashonaland			Matebeleland		
	Kuwadzana	**Goromonzi**	**Murewah**	**Magwegwe**	**Rangemore**	**Thsolotsho**
Named actors that perpetuate violence	• Police • ZANU-PF Youths • Neighbourhood police • Political leaders • National Youth • Service graduates • MDC-T Youths • War veterans • Individuals	• ZANU-PF leaders and supporters • Parents • Jesuits and Catholic priests • Political leaders • Police • War veterans • Individuals • Couples • Step-parents • MDC • Corrupt police	• Party youth • Local leaders • Thugs • National Youth Service graduates • Parents, relatives	• Youths • Prostitutes • Individuals, thugs • Party youth • Parents and guardians • Police • The army • Police • ZANU-PF supporters	• Just individuals, thugs • ZANU-PF supporters • Youth • Thugs • Local leaders, councillors	• ZANU-PF members • Zimbabwean youth deported from South Africa • War veterans • Police • National Youth Service graduates
Forms of violence ranked in order of priority	• Domestic violence • Physical violence • Murder • Emotional abuse * • Intimidation * • Political violence • Murder • Verbal abuse • Tribalism • Gender-based violence • Assault • Harassment • Sexual harassment	• Child abuse • Forced relocation and land grab* • Prostitution • Political threat and violence* • Forced participation in political activities* • Forced labour for girls • Religious intolerance • Domestic violence • Political intimidation	• Domestic violence • Emotional abuse • Intimidation* • Harassment of women	• Child abuse • Sexual abuse • Rape • Threats* • Physical violence • Psychological abuse • Abusive police • Assault by police* • Torture* • Tribalism • Emotional abuse	• Emotional abuse • Domestic violence • Verbal abuse • Murder • Tribalism • Assault • Sexual harassment • Political violence* • Intimidation* • Physical violence	• Emotional abuse* • Intimidation * • Child abuse • Rape • Election violence* • Destruction of properties* • Politically motivated harassment* • Exclusion from jobs* • Murder • Sexual harassment • Domestic violence • Physical violence • Political threat*

* indicates types of violence labelled political violence.

station where he was beaten up. The police have recently stepped up their aggressive behaviour, after two dead bodies were found in Magwegwe. The relationship between youth and the police is complicated by the fact that police want to be addressed in Shona, and the youth feel the police discriminate against them.

Boys and girls also gave high scores to violent crime in Rangemore. This is a low-density area., with no police station, only a neighbourhood watch scheme. Located on the outskirts of the main town, the area can be a hide-out for criminals. In all sites, girls were afraid of thugs, who sometimes operate in gangs. In Tsolotsho, girls referred to thugs as 'the deportees' (*injiva*), indicating that most of the thugs were Zimbabwean youths who had been deported from South Africa and were engaged in crime. A common idea among young people was that 'the best-known criminals in South Africa are from Tsholotsho'. Prevalence of crime directly affects the mobility of young women, because just walking through an area can increase the risk of becoming a victim of crime, especially after dark. Because of the long distances between plots in Rangemore, for instance, girls spend most of their time indoors.

Violence against women

Female participants from all six sites reported various forms of violence against women, while male participants did not report as many forms of violence against women, and often gave it lower scores when they did. Young women often included violent crime in public places under the rubric 'violence against women', mainly because they were afraid of becoming victims of rape, or of robberies turning into cases of sexual violence. Many public places like certain streets, community halls and beer halls, are not considered safe, because that is where men and boys hang around and drink. In all research sites, girls spend a lot of time at home apart from the necessary shopping, economic activities, fetching water and collecting firewood. They socialise with friends at home or near the shops and are usually home before dark.

Domestic violence was the form of violence against women experienced most often, receiving high scores in all sites. Forms of domestic violence ranged from sexual abuse to forced labour and being denied resources, or even food, by partners and family members. Girls in various sites attributed the high prevalence of domestic violence and emotional abuse to unemployment and the fact that many couples were very young. From the life story interviews it transpired that domestic violence and abuse often happened to young women who had come to stay with distant relatives, away from their parents. Our participants stated that cases were usually not reported to the police, because of the fear that it might lead to the arrest of the breadwinners of the family or to social relationships with relatives breaking down. Female participants considered child abuse and forced labour of younger girls to be a form of domestic violence. They associated it with families breaking up and parents having to migrate to find work, after which children often had to take over the labour of the adult who had left.

Girls pointed to economic factors that caused violence against women. Jobs are scarce, and girls experience pressure from (potential) employers to have sex in return for a job. In Matabeleland, sexual favours to a boss was an issue that came up in all locations. Several participants said that they had been approached by their managers – even those who were married – who had 'asked' for a sexual

relationship. Some explicitly stated they had refused, no one admitted to having accepted, but all emphasised how difficult it was to keep their jobs if they refused to have sex.

Finally, social institutions were responsible for various forms of violence against young women. This was particularly the case in rural areas, but examples were cited in all sites, and cultural norms concerning early marriage and domestic labour were experienced as oppressive. Girls from Goromonzi talked at length about violence perpetrated by the Baptist church, which defends early marriage and marriage between young girls and old men. Elders in this church perform virginity tests on young women and expose those girls who have committed 'offences' to the church community.

Political violence and intimidation

Participants emphasised physical manifestations of political violence: destruction of property, houses burnt down, and injuries and death caused by the violence inflicted by security actors and party youth. All of these have long-lasting consequences for entire families. Despite the fact that such violence is not experienced on an everyday basis, boys and girls agreed it was so serious that they gave it high scores. Generally, experiences of political violence, repression and intimidation were more common in the sites in Mashonaland (Kuwadzana, Goromonzi and Murewah) because these areas are more contested in terms of ZANU-PF aiming to maintain its control and curb MDC support. In Matabeleland, where the majority of the population supports MDC, ZANU-PF seems to use less political violence but it is thought to undermine the region economically.

Youth labelled forms of exclusion as political violence if there was any sense that political parties and politics were the cause of exclusion from access to economic resources and opportunities. They considered threats from party-affiliated actors to take away economic resources as a form of political intimidation. For instance, exclusion of (suspected) opposition supporters from access to farming inputs and food aid was the most important form of political violence highlighted in Murewah. Traditional leaders, with the help of National Youth Service (NYS) youth and war veterans, identified 'errant families' who would not receive the distributed farm inputs. Such practices continue throughout the years in between elections. Section 3.3 further explains forms of structural violence that were highlighted by the young participants: mainly exclusion from jobs, land ownership and resources, based on ethnicity and party affiliation.

Participants grouped forms of intimidation under the rubric of political violence, but the discussions showed that intimidation and repression are experienced as a permanent threat, which intensifies around elections, while physical manifestations of political violence are usually limited to election periods only. Intimidation is carried out by state actors and party-affiliated entities like party youth.

It is manifested in direct threats as well in the experience of being under permanent surveillance, due to the presence of intelligence officers in the community. Interestingly, participants from the sites in Mashonaland were able to identify specific people in their communities known to be members of the CIO while many of the youth from Matabeleland did not know who exactly the local

informants were but they 'had learnt' that they existed and this knowledge affects their behaviour, as Section 3.4 will explain. In urban Magwegwe, despite low levels of political violence in the past, the youth were still wary about informants, dressed in civilian clothes, who gather intelligence. 'We have been told and we know that there are state agents in our area and they are there just to listen to all we say. The knowledge of their presence intimidates us. We are not free and we cannot say our opinions out loud', explained a girl in Magwegwe. The boys said they could recognise the external agents, who would attend big gatherings or parties in Magwegwe and could be identified by their vehicles and the way they moved through the crowd.

Across the three sites in Matabeleland, but especially in Tsholotsho, the 'sphere of Gukurahundi' prevailed. The ways in which knowledge about Gukurahundi was transmitted to younger generations fed into feelings of political repression. Only a few of our participants knew the details of what had happened during Gukurahundi from what their parents and grandparents had told them. The majority of the participants only knew that 'bad things' 'involving Shona people' had happened in 'the 1980s' and that there were good reasons to fear uniformed forces.

Election violence 2008

Given the age band of our participants (16–25) it is not surprising that the 2008 elections had left a strong impression and that these events were highlighted in the discussions. The majority of the older participants had directly experienced or witnessed election violence. There were slight variations across the research sites in terms of how election violence was manifested and who had perpetrated it (see Tables 3.1 and 3.2). The patterns of violence during the 2008 elections are well documented. This sub-section highlights what our participants specified about their home areas, because for many this has shaped their attitudes to political and violence in the present day.

In Kuwadzana, high levels of violence targeted MDC supporters in 2008. Youth from both sides had engaged in violence. In the case of the 2013 elections, participants said that threats, forced participation in political meetings and physical assaults were the most important forms of violence. In between elections, youth supporting different parties sometimes clash; a game of pool at the bar can end up in a fight. Many young MDC-T supporters are not afraid to show their party affiliation, but also say they experience the polarised environment as a threat. Peri-urban Goromonzi was for a long time a ZANU-PF support area and therefore experienced little violence in the early 2000s. When MDC gained votes in 2008 the regime responded violently. Torture camps were established (Institute for War and Peace Reporting 2012). The participants stated that there had been little physical violence in 2013, although there had been high levels of intimidation and forced participation by ZANU-PF youth. Road blocks made moving in and out of Goromonzi difficult, and the young people said that even the combi drivers were stopped and made to chant ZANU-PF party slogans and songs. Finally, in rural Murewah forced participation at militia bases had been the most important form of violence, where people experienced various forms of brutal violence. Boys had been beaten when they had attempted to flee or fight back. In 2013, Murewah youth had only experienced intimidation and forced participation in rallies

organised by the ZANU-PF youth. The ZANU-PF youth in our focus groups had not experienced this as violence, saying they had to support their fathers 'against the enemy since the country was at war'. During the 2013 elections NYS youth were stationed near the polling station and wrote the names of the people who came to vote. They asked voters to raise their voter slips and show the serial number. This gave voters the impression that the NYS would be able to find out how they had voted. The participants also reported that people from other areas arrived on buses to vote in Murewah, increasing the number of voters. In the area of Murewah where many Mozambican immigrants live, the village heads took them to a polling station in a different constituency and made them queue separately, exposing them as foreigners.

In Matabeleland, urban Magwegwe and peri-urban Rangemore were less affected by the election violence in 2008 than the sites in Mashonaland. Youth from Magwegwe recalled that soldiers had abducted parents from their neighbourhood, who had been severely beaten. For 2013, they stated there were no incidents of forced participation and that rallies for both parties had taken place without any violent clashes. Youth from Rangemore indicated ZANU-PF is less interested in the area because it is a low-density area and was therefore less affected in 2008. In 2013 campaign activities took place without any violence. In rural Tsolotsho the 2008 election violence had been far more serious. The young people said that base camps had been established by war veterans and ZANU-PF militia. Several of our participants had been abducted to these camps, where they were forced to sing the party songs and many had experienced physical and sexual violence.

As explained in Section 1.3, Zimbabwe has an extensive system of surveillance and repression. Election violence is carried out by the state's security forces and state-supported entities such as the war veterans, National Youth Service graduates, and party youth. In between elections these actors are often involved in politicised systems of exclusion, for example the allocation of market stalls and agricultural inputs to ZANU-PF members. Exactly how this is manifested depends on the history of a location, the strength of ZANU-PF or of the opposition, and on the configuration of social and political actors. It varies between urban to rural areas, and from one region to another. All these factors need to be taken into account when looking at experiences of violence in a particular area and at how youth responds. Section 5 will describe the various forms of agency among youth. The findings show that they adjust their responses to the types of threat and the prevalent perpetrators in their areas.

3.3 Forms of structural violence

Section 3.2 showed that, when asked to list and explain the types of violence they experience, our participants emphasised forms of structural violence. Not all forms of structural violence were deemed politically motivated in the sense of having been perpetrated by state actors. This section describes the various forms of structural violence and shows it is also caused by generational and ethnic differences.

3.3.1 Economic exclusion

Youth feel excluded from economic opportunities and jobs and increasingly sense that education is not going to make a difference. They highlight corruption, patronage along party lines, and discrimination based on age and/or ethnicity as the main reasons why young people are unemployed, reinforcing the effects of the country's difficult economic situation. The majority knew about some of the funds and loan schemes earmarked for youth, like the Kurera/Ukondla Youth Fund,[7] but were disappointed by the way these schemes were implemented. Most participants were unaware of initiatives and policies such as ZimAsset or indigenisation and when these were explained, they often commented that they would probably 'not benefit the youth anyway'. During the 2013 elections ZANU-PF had promised two million jobs for youth, but the fact that a year later there had been no improvement in youth unemployment was yet another cause of disillusionment.

How to find a job was the primary concern of virtually all participants, and a lively topic in all focus groups. Discussions showed that simply a lack of jobs is not the only reason for unemployment among youth. Both boys and girls emphasised that getting a job depended on being 'well connected', on being a member of the right party, and on giving bribes.

> Those who work in the Ministry of Youth choose their close friends and family members and if you are not known by any member of the Ministry of Youth you will never be selected or even hear of such programmes. The only time we get to hear of such programmes is after they have been held. The way they choose people it's mainly through friendship, whereas some are chosen because they are from the same political party.[8]

In Matabeleland a common complaint was that many managers are Shona, who will either employ Shona people or demand of Ndebele youth that they speak Shona:

> Shona get first preference because of their school results. The Shona are treated superior in everything at all times. In Matabeleland, Shonas are treated better than us. […] We don't know what happens, but Shona are dominating everywhere in the country, it is an open secret.[9]

Shona participants did not mention discrimination in the job market based on ethnicity, but emphasised party affiliation and 'being in the right circle' of people in powerful positions (from headmen to business people) as the main criteria for finding a job. Especially youth from Kuwadzana, an MDC constituency, claimed they were discriminated against wherever they went for jobs. Officials and employers would simply state they were from an MDC area and therefore were not being considered. A number of young people from Kuwadzana had joined the demonstrations organised by MDC to mark the anniversary of the 2013 elections

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7 This is a loan scheme that can be used by people aged 18–35 years to start up a business in which they create employment for other young people.

8 Focus group, boys, Thsolotsho, 18 May 2014.

9 Focus group, girls, Thsholotsho, 16 May 2014.

and protest against the incumbent government, motivated by their disappointment over the promised two million jobs that had not materialised.[10]

Many of our participants in both Matabeleland and Mashonaland had tried to apply for funding or loan schemes. The majority were unsuccessful. Seeing that most of their friends of the same age had also failed to access these programmes, many opted to give up trying. In all research sites the young people complained about the corrupt local government officials, war veterans and party youth who allegedly appropriated funds and projects earmarked for youth. Many Ndebele young people felt their applications had failed because they were not Shona or could not provide evidence that they supported to Zanu-PF. One of the more active young people in Magwegwe, who knows the 'rules of the game', explained he was unsuccessful the first time he tried, but when his uncle, who is a Zanu-PF district official, wrote him a letter of recommendation, he received the funding he asked for.

The participants identified other categories of people associated with ZANU-PF, as well as those who are actually members of ZANU-PF, who benefit unfairly from government programmes. In the land reform process farms were given to war veterans and not to young people, who – with some training and farming inputs – could have built a livelihood. They felt that young people who participated in the National Youth Service (NYS) have better access to jobs, loan schemes and development projects. Several participants commented, however, that even NYS graduates and those young people who had been heavily involved in campaigns for ZANU-PF had not benefited as much as they had expected, or were promised. 'There is no protection for those that campaign for politicians, because soon after elections these relationships are left to fade. They are not even financially close [now].'[11] Although aligning with ZANU-PF may be a strategy for many young people, it seems that many others weigh up the risks and opportunities of engagement and decide to stay out.

3.3.2 Exclusion from political life

Young people are as disappointed and disillusioned about Zimbabwe's political institutions as they are about the mechanisms that are supposed to boost their economic opportunities – if not more so. An important reason for their distrust is the perceived prevalence of corruption in the state apparatus, from the highest office at national level down to the local level. They have all lost faith in the electoral process in particular, saying that voting never makes a difference in their lives. Several of our participants said they had refused to vote, because of the violence they had experienced in 2008. All of them said that, again, there has not been any positive change since the 2013 elections, and many stated that therefore they would not vote in the future. Participants from both regions expressed the view that young people are not well represented in any of the political institutions. This viewpoint is shared even by young supporters and members of ZANU-PF. They emphasise that the chairman of the ZANU-PF youth league, Absalom Sikhosana, is in his early sixties and refuses to make way for young leaders.

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10 See: 'MDC-T Youths in Abortive Demo', *The Herald*, 1 August 2014, www.herald.co.zw/mdc-t-youths-in-abortive-demo

11 Focus group, girls, Rangemore, 17 May 2014.

Also at the local level, youth have no confidence that engagement with state institutions will lead to any tangible outcome for them. Local councillors are considered part and parcel of the polarised, and potentially risky, political scene. In Magwegwe, participants joked about the local councillor and called her house a 'dark place'. The girls stated it was 'normal' and 'expected' that young people were ignored by this councillor. Two of the girls had been to meetings she had called, but said that young people were never given the opportunity to speak at these meetings and many had therefore stopped attending. However, in Kuwadzana the young MDC MP and the local councillor were an inspiration to many 'activist youth' and the councillor's home was considered a space where they could meet.

The role of youth officers, who are part of the Ministry of Youth and responsible for supporting youth initiatives, is ambiguous. In our research sites many participants did not know about the existence of youth officers at district or even ward level, nor about their responsibilities. Depending on their affiliation and behaviour they were judged to be 'neutral' or 'political', which affected the young people's willingness to interact with them.

In the rural areas *sambukhu* (headmen) are powerful actors. They are strongly associated with ZANU-PF and therefore not considered too dangerous by those of our participants who strongly supported ZANU-PF (especially those from Murewah). Generally, however, *sambukhu* are not regarding as being on the side of youth, but as part of the establishment that sees young people as trouble-makers. The participants from Murewah and Thsolotsho was aware that they needed to treat them with due respect. 'We side with our community leaders and we never question or oppose what they say, because what they say is always final. We do not argue and if a leader says "jump" we just ask how high. They have power over us so we abide by their rules.'[12]

Finally, the police are a source of insecurity instead of protection. Our participants unanimously felt that they harass people more than they help them. Section 3.2 on types of violence described how the police represent a threat to youth in particular.

This does not mean that young people lack aspirations or ideas about how political life could be improved for them. Many feel there is a 'missing link' between them and the MPs and therefore MPs cannot represent youth issues well. The majority felt, however, that young people should have their own MPs and youth quota in parliament, referring to South Africa as an example. They want to be genuinely heard by political representatives, to have more frequent interactions and to be able to voice their demands.

3.3.3 Social exclusion: perceptions of relations with older generations

The notion of citizenship used in this study includes relations among citizens, in addition to citizen–state relations. In this regard, youth feel like second-class citizens because of their marginalisation not just in political life, but also in social life. Being denied a voice is experienced in the home as much as in the public sphere. A girl from Thsolotsho said: 'When we try to talk about what we learn at

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12 Focus group, girls, Thsolotsho, 16 May 2014.

school they [family members] always tell us to keep quiet, because we do not know much yet.'[13]

Across the research sites the youth felt marginalised, and actively disadvantaged and stigmatised by older generations. The participants in Matabeleland listed a number of derogatory nicknames older generations use for them: *mbanjeni* – marijuana addicts (used even if the young people didn't smoke marijuana); *izidakwa* – drunkards; *izifebe* – prostitutes; *amalema lawo* – foolish generation; *otsotsi* – thieves; *olova* – loafers with nothing better to do; *amacrook* – criminals. The Shona participants said they were called smokers, addicts, thieves and lazy people; *marombe* – loafers; *mafikizolo* – 'you only just came'.

Perhaps the most significant is the term 'born frees', which is used in both regions. The older generations who lived and fought through the independence struggle use this term for the younger generations born after 1980: those who did not have to struggle for their freedom. The implication of the use of this nickname is what makes it significant: the older generation use it to argue that young people are not entitled to have a say on anything important. Many young people have internalised this idea of being part of the born-free generation, and it has reinforced the existing norm that the young have to be deferential in relation to their elders. One of the participants indicated that 'born-free' was used in particular when 'the grown-ups' discussed public and community affairs, financial matters, and decisions affecting the household. Thus, as a consequence, the young are denied voice and influence. 'It makes us feel useless, because it is used to imply we cannot face difficult situations'.[14]

3.3.4 Ethnic identity and exclusion: perceptions of Shona–Ndebele relations

Ndebele youth, both girls and boys, feel there is inequality between Mashonaland and Matabeleland: 'Things happen in Harare that do not happen in Bulawayo.' In their view, the Shona youth have much better access to information, resources and jobs, they enjoy better education and have a greater chance of being selected for scholarships. A girl commented: 'It is like the Shona are the legitimate citizens of Zimbabwe.'[15] Many indicated they 'didn't really like the Shona' and called them '*masvina*' (dirt) when they were angry. They thought Shona people regarded the Ndebele as backward, less-educated and lazy.

Generally, Ndebele youth felt the Shona were more respected in urban areas than in rural areas. In Thsolotsho, rural Matabeleland, Gukurahundi came up as a reason why Ndebele people have antipathy towards the Shona. Girls from Thsolotsho said that 'this hatred is passed on from generation to generation. Nothing can be done, because those that died cannot be resurrected and those that were injured cannot be healed. Parents told their daughters not to marry Shona boys.'[16] A heated discussion developed in the focus group with girls from

13 Focus group, girls, Thsolotsho, 16 May 2014.

14 *Ibid.*

15 Focus group, girls, Magwegwe, 17 May 2014.

16 Focus group, girls, Thoslotsho, 19 May 2014.

Tsholotso, with some arguing that everyone should just stay in their own region with their own ethnic group and use a passport to travel to other regions. Others commented that 'Shona will just always be there' and it would be an improvement if Ndebele people were better represented in government.

The Shona participants confirmed that Ndebele people are often considered stubborn. Goromonzi boys said that 'Ndebele are good people, but they are looked down upon'.[17] Ndebele are called 'ndex', but participants said the Ndebele have more nicknames for Shona people because the antipathy towards the Shona is more intense than the other way round. They also acknowledged the inequality between Mashonaland and Matabeleland, and other regions:

> I doubt whether Bulawayo even gets anything, like ZimAssets, as the Ndebele people are not highly favoured. In political terms they are said to be opposition to the ruling party so I doubt whether the youths there are treated equally as the youths of Harare. […] And in places such as Manicaland the people are just lied to as they are far from what's happening. So, you can see when the word youths is being used [seriously]: it applies to youths in Harare only.[18]

Some justified the exclusion of Ndebele people from high-level political posts and stated they could at most occupy the 'vice' posts in the military, the various government bodies, and education institutions, because that was just how 'Zimbabwean society' had raised the people: a culture that affirms the superiority of the Shona people.[19] The Shona participants associated this inequality with the Ndebele support for the opposition, and political leaders in the opposition would instruct young people to be against the regime. They were aware that the inequality had historical roots, as the Ndebele were considered to be 'sell-outs' of Zimbabwe and that the Ndebele felt that the Unity Accord had not led to equality for Matebeleland. But also within Mashonaland youth experienced inequalities. Young people from Goromonzi said they weren't even that far away from Harare, but they are disadvantaged by the government, which works only for 'the city'.

Thus, Section 3.3 has shown that Zimbabwe's youth face a range of life challenges, and living in a repressive regime environment is but one of them. Some of the problems are not experienced by young people alone, such as forms of economic and political exclusion based on ethnicity or party membership. It is not surprising, however, that these problems are felt particularly strongly by the generation that has only recently left school and is trying to establish itself. Tensions experienced in relations with older generations and the sense of social marginalisation are characteristic for the country's youth. This section has shown that this has implications for citizenship: exclusion, in whatever form, undermines citizen agency among young people. Section 3.4 describes social factors that shape citizen agency among youth.

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17 Focus group, boys, Goromonzi, 25 August 2014.

18 *Ibid.*

19 Focus group, boys, Kuwadzana, 27 August 2014.

3.4 Young people growing up

This section describes the factors that influence the attitudes of young men and women towards politics and the wider political context. The study examined the process of socialisation of youth in Zimbabwe's context, using the River of Life drawing technique in combination with individual follow-up interviews. The findings show that the attitudes and behaviours of youth towards the public sphere are strongly influenced by the young people's social backgrounds, and especially by family and friends. Their background shapes their responses to the political situation generally, political party activities, and instances of political violence. Furthermore, this section shows that also the events of 2008 left a strong impression on the country's youth and shapes their ideas about engagement in the public domain.

A first pattern observed from the River of Life story interviews showed that as well as influencing young people's attitude to politics, families and peers both motivate and temper their engagement in political activities. Many participants stated that their families had repeatedly warned them not to get involved into politics. One boy from Tsholotsho said his parents had told him: 'Either you stay home and don't do politics, or you leave the house.'[20] A girl from Thsolotsho whose friend and neighbour tried to persuade her to get involved in a party was told off by the girl's father. Another girl explained how her parents had taught her that politics was something ugly and those people wanting to become involved in politics were made to do ugly things, which is the reason why she stayed away from it.[21]

The youth who were very active in either ZANU-PF or MDC-T formed a minority in our sample. Of this group, most had been motivated to get involved in a party by a family member (usually a parent or older sibling) or a close friend, generally someone who was very involved him or herself. For example, a girl from Murewah, who openly supports ZANU-PF, explained how her family, especially her grandparents, encouraged her to sympathise with the party in power. Her grandparents had told her about the liberation struggle and she feels the instructions of these older people can make a lot of sense. A girl from Magwegwe had applied to enrol in the NYS because some of her classmates had enrolled and encouraged her, but she also liked how they were able to provide for their siblings after they had found jobs as NYS graduates. However, she stated she would never engage in violent activities during elections.

Girls and boys experience the influence of friends and family differently, which indicates the gendered experience of citizenship and social relations with family and peers. Families try to keep girls at home, not least because they are worried about sexual assaults during political turmoil. In urban areas, however, girls seem to be more present in the public domain. Boys are generally more inclined to spend time in public areas, which increases the likelihood that they are exposed to political party activities. Boys are also likely to be more exposed to peer pressure from groups of friends they hang out with, either to stay out of political activities or to engage in them. As it is harder to keep boys at home, families sometimes decide to send them to safer areas for a period of time.

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20 Focus group, boys, Thsolotsho, 3 June 2013.

21 Interview, girl from Magwegwe, 30 January 2014.

A second pattern that emerged from the interviews was that youth learn from family and friends about how to navigate the repressive environment and instances of political violence. Young people learn from their families and friends from an early age about the insecurities of the public sphere. They learn that it is not safe to speak about anything 'political' in public. Even in the homes, though most young people consider this to be their safest place, 'the walls may listen'. A girl from Tsholotsho recounted how she had come back from South Africa and made a remark about President Mugabe at home. Her grandmother immediately warned her not to say such things. Especially those whose families support the opposition will have learnt from their parents that they just have to put up with a certain amount of coercion from political actors, but that they have their vote in the ballot box. A girl from Kuwadzana told us her uncle had been shot in the leg during the 2002 election violence and that he:

> […] always teaches us children that we should not be seriously involved in politics and stay away from it. However, sometimes you should not disengage completely to preserve your life. If they come for you, you go with them if you like it or not. He says he was shot because he was running away from the things that happened at that time.[22]

The findings showed differences for youth growing up in rural and those in urban areas. In rural areas such as Murewah and Thsolotsho, where the youth have relatively less access to information about national politics and political events, social institutions like the family, churches and schools seemed to have a much bigger influence on their attitude to politics and forms of engagement than was observed among urban and peri-urban youth. For instance, the above-mentioned girl from Murewah explained how in her church the sermons and the Bible were used to instruct the congregation to vote for ZANU-PF. Church leaders taught the community that 'good Christians should accept those that are in power and should not undermine the One that is on the throne', thus drawing parallels between God and the President. One of the boys from Murewah explains how his teachers had been influential in his support for ZANU-PF, saying: '… as you might be aware, if a child is taught a language or anything when they are still young it is very difficult for them to let go of that thing or language. It was inculcated in me that ZANU-PF is the way to go and it now runs in my bloodstream'.

The election violence of 2008 has had a great impact on those young people who were old enough at the time to realise the seriousness of it, or to have directly experienced acts of violence. Witnessing or experiencing acts of political violence has a strong impact, but it can work either way: some of the youth decided to become 'real activists' while the majority opted for complete withdrawal from anything to do with politics. Importantly, however, in most cases the choice to become very engaged or entirely disengaged seemed to have been informed to a great extent by the young person's social background and how they had been raised in this political context.[23] A boy from Murewah had lost his father who had

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22 Interview, girl from Kuwadzana, 29 November 2013.

23 The research design for this study did not systematically measure social background indicators, types and intensity of violence experienced by youth, and present-day levels of citizen engagement. This would be an interesting area for future study, which would require a mixed-methods approach.

become a victim of the election violence in 2008. His father had been an active supporter of MDC and therefore was taken to a ZANU-PF base camp, where he was assaulted and subsequently died. ZANU-PF people then raided their home and took all their livestock. The boy said: 'I am sure, if he had not been involved in opposition politics he would have been alive up to now. … Politics is bad because it killed my father. If I am reminded of the events that killed my father I cry. The situation is made worse because at school I meet the children whose parents assaulted my father and I am always reminded of that time and I end up crying.'[24] He did not attend any rally or event in 2013, because of what happened. Box 3.1 tells the story of Cathleen from Murewah and shows what motivated her involvement in MDC.

Box 3.1 Cathleen from Murewah

Cathleen is 33 years old. Cathleen and her husband and were involved in the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (where Morgan Tsvangirai was General Secretary) in the late 1990s. They joined MDC when it was formed in 1999. They hoped for change when a young leader like Tsvangirai would be in power. They particularly hoped for a better economy and livelihoods. Cathleen says her sister, who was very active in politics, had a big influence on her, while their parents did not at all. Because of her involvement in MDC, soldiers had once tried to assault her sister. Her sister had successfully resisted that attack, but she had been harassed by soldiers ever since. This motivated Cathleen to get involved with MDC too. She and her husband were both imprisoned in 1999. They were severely beaten during the 2008 election violence and all their livestock and other assets were taken from them. They still suffer the consequences, as her husband never fully recovered from his injuries and they have never managed to fully re-establish their livelihoods. Cathleen emphasises that there has to be change, no matter what. When her husband proposed hiding during the 2013 elections she refused, saying, 'We will all die one day anyway.' However, about the future elections in 2018 she says she will only support the MDC-T 'from the sideline', because she is afraid there won't be anyone to take care of her children if she dies in election violence. Cathleen's story shows her engagement in MDC has a longer history of exposure and experience with engagement, in which her husband played an important role. It also shows the influence of a close family member and the events of 2008.

As well as the effect of having experienced or witnessed the election violence in 2008, knowledge of political violence in earlier years, and of how it had affected family members, also influenced the young people's attitude to politics. Some of our participants referred to relatives who had been injured during the 2002 and 2005 elections, or whose families were badly affected by Operation Murambatsvina in 2005, as reasons for staying out of politics. In Matabeleland, the stories parents and grandparents told about Gukurahundi had instilled a lot of fear. Again, for a minority among our participants such events were a reason for engagement, but the conditions under which they chose that path need further research.

The consequences of excessive political violence go beyond the immediate death or injury of family members and loss of livestock. The boy from Murewah whose father was killed in 2008 dropped out of school afterwards because his mother had no money for school fees. Many of the young people associate the 2008 elections with teacher strikes, schools closing, and exams being cancelled. Several of our

24 Interview, boy from Murewah, 3 December 2013.

participants had been unable to sit their exams and therefore missed out on their diplomas. Thus, indirectly the election violence had affected their opportunities in the job market. To many participants these were further reasons why party politics had negative connotations and prompted disengagement from political life. Only one boy from Rangemore indicated that he was motivated to become an MDC activist and had mobilised others, because the ruling party had 'destroyed' his education.[25]

Finally, the findings show differences between age groups within the category 'youth'. Younger people (aged 16–18) are relatively less exposed to political violence, especially if they are attending school. They were very young when the 2008 elections took place and some had not been exposed to the election violence at all. Many were aware, however, how it had affected their families and they knew elections were periods of increased risk. Those aged 18–22 have already developed political awareness. They are more likely to be targeted by political parties, party youth and war veterans, because they have left school and need something to do, and because they are new voters. They may well have experienced the 2008 election violence, which will have shaped their attitude to politics now. Many emphasised that they had missed school and exams during this period, which affected them badly. In the case of those older than 22–25, many have started families of their own and have either 'chosen sides' or decided to stay as far away from politics as possible. Many of them had experienced political violence in 2008 and also had memories of election violence in 2002 and 2005. Because of the need to establish homes and families, this age group was particularly concerned about forms of structural violence that were perpetuated by the political situation.

Thus, these findings do not negate the idea that a high level of unemployment among youth is an important driver for engagement in political party activities, but they offer a more nuanced perspective on what shapes the attitudes of towards the political context. The next section discusses the diverse strategies young people have developed in response to their political context and instances of political violence.

4 Responses to political violence and intimidation

The previous section showed that there is reason enough to think that young people would be willing to engage in violence because of the structural causes of the many forms of exclusion they face and the impact this has on their prospects and opportunities. This last empirical section addresses the last of the central questions of this study: how do young Zimbabwean citizens respond to political violence? This section demonstrates the range of tactics observed, highlighting gender differences where relevant.

All of our participants consider political violence to be very serious and damaging, and living with the feeling that one is always under surveillance has become a way

25 Interview, boy from Rangemore, 4 February 2014.

of life. Youth use a combination of strategies in response to political violence and intimidation, but clear differences exist between boys and girls. The findings show that withdrawal from the public sphere and staying away from political actors and discourses are the most important tactics in everyday life. These may be typical responses to repressive regime environments, complementing Barter's (2012) framework on civilian strategies in contexts of armed conflict. Youth who decide to be more actively engaged need other tactics and peer support to stay safe, especially when they are involved with the opposition.

4.1 Avoiding the public sphere

We had a number of 'activists' in our focus groups who openly supported a political party. The majority of our participants, however, try to just 'stay out': don't talk politics, don't do politics. Tactics include avoiding politics as a topic of conversation, and avoiding the people and places associated with party politics. When 'outside' in public places youth automatically avoid talking about politics:

> You only talk to people you know and not just anyone otherwise you will talk to the CIO personnel without realising that that is what you are doing. I don't find the shops very safe – you will not know who is listening in to your conversation. There may be plain clothes policemen around.[26]

A range of words is used to describe the people who might report you to the government when they hear you talk against the regime: enemies, strangers, outsiders, 'sell-outs'[27] (referring to people you know; informants among friends and relatives), CIO, police, and plain clothes police. Avoiding sensitive issues in public is almost a subconscious process: young people just speak about other things. Some did say they felt sufficiently comfortable around very good friends – the ones they grew up with – to speak about politics to a certain extent. Others mentioned that one had to be careful even among friends, because there might be 'sell-outs' among them.

In terms of behaviours, youth avoid being associated with 'political activists', war veterans and NYS graduates, and party youth. Young people who opt for withdrawal pay attention to their dress and avoid colours that are associated with ZANU-PF (yellow and green) and MDC-T (red). It is particularly important to avoid being labelled 'opposition supporter'. Indeed, some of the MDC activists in our study stated that many young people avoided any contact with them to prevent being associated with MDC. Staying away from places where party activities were likely to take place, like beer halls or community halls, was a tactic particularly used during elections. Many participants stated it helped to find 'something to do' to stay off the streets during these times and avoid being targeted by the parties. For girls, this mainly entails staying at home. For boys, playing soccer was an important activity that enables them to stay out of politics and also to cope with the negative consequences of violence.

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26 Focus group, girls, Goromonzi, 28 November 2013.

27 The label 'sell-out' is used by ZANU-PF supporters and war veterans for MDC-T supporters and those who have 'sold out' the country to the West.

Participants reported it was not easy for young people, especially boys, to have a social gathering, because the police would suspect it was a 'political gathering' where politics were discussed. If they want to organise any gathering they have to seek permission from the police and, in rural areas, also from the headmen. Some of the politically engaged youth have found ways to find a way round these rules. In some areas there are 'safe houses' where they can meet. But also the less-engaged youth just want to meet up as friends. Boys from Goromonzi said they would therefore meet 'in the bush' if they wanted to talk, and after church services.[28] Also Kuwadzana youth said they sometimes met secretly in bushy areas, hidden away from the public eye.

Youth centres and community centres are not necessarily safe spaces. Some of the community centres have been used as base camps and torture centres in past elections. In everyday life the safety of these centres depends on whether certain party-affiliated actors are dominating the space, and how. Community centres in Bulawayo have long been supported by the City Council and, because of the strength of MDC in the area since 2000, they can operate relatively autonomously. Youth from Magwegwe said that young people supporting different parties could take part in activities in the same centre. In Mashonaland, such public centres are more likely to be politicised.

Avoidance was the predominant strategy mentioned in all research sites, despite the variation in possible exposure to political violence and intimidation. In all areas the young people avoid party youth, while those in rural areas in particular need to tread carefully because of living with war veterans and traditional leaders. The relevance of avoidance tactics seems to be higher in Mashonaland, where there are more tensions between government and opposition supporters, and more intense regime control. Yet in Matabeleland, particularly in Tsholotsho, the legacy of Gukurahundi intersects with the feeling of being always under surveillance. Even though only a few of our participants from urban Magwegwe and peri-urban Rangemore had directly experienced *acts* of violence – in contrast with the experience of participants from Mashonaland – their suspicion of the public sphere was persistent. In the first phase of the research all participants avoided mentioning even the word 'Gukurahundi', but instead spoke of 'what happened in the 1980s'. Only in subsequent phases, when participants had become more familiar with the research team, did some of them speak more openly about Gukurahundi if they knew about it. They explained that other young people might not know about this episode because parents and grandparents believed that not telling them was a form of protection. Boys from Tsholotsho explained the presence of soldiers and other uniformed security personnel invariably gave rise to suspicion. Even when soldiers were deployed to assist the area after heavy floods in March 2014 it was suspected that this could be a tactic to carry out political surveillance.

4.2 Everyday co-existence

In everyday life, youth who support different parties have to live together in their neighbourhoods. In between elections this need not create any friction. One only

28 Focus group, boys, Goromonzi, 25 August 2014.

has to be careful around the more active supporters with links to the party, but otherwise youth just 'live together'. Both boys and girls reported they used such a 'co-existence strategy' and this strategy figured in all six research sites. A young boy from Rangemore explained:

> We just tolerate ZANU-PF supporters. We act like they are not different from anyone else. We let them be, because you don't know what might happen if you raise certain issues around them. At times you have to join them just to keep the peace. You attend their functions. But come Election Day you just vote for whoever you want to vote for.[29]

Many young people have to live with community members who participated in political violence during past elections. They try to live together with these perpetrators and behave as normally as possible towards them, in order to avoid being 'singled out'. A girl from Matabeleland explained how this works:

> The fact that we know them or that we grew up with them, went to school with them or are our neighbour makes we cannot change the way we relate with them. Before elections these perpetrators are our friends and we relate quite well with them until election time comes. Even during elections or times of violence we still relate with them well so as to keep good relations lest you are the next victim. Change in behaviour might attract violence so we do not try to avoid them. Boys relate differently, they can make it clear when they do not approve of something. They can be stubborn and can show intolerance and at times they can provoke perpetrators. Girls can only do this only if they are trained [to fight].[30]

In Murewah, where violence was severe in 2008, young people used the same strategy. A minimum level of social interaction is maintained in the exchange of 'pleasantries': 'We just greet each other. But sometimes people fight over past hurts because people have not yet healed from the pain of what happened.'[31] The Shona expression used was '*zino irema*', meaning you just smile even if you don't like them. Participants from Murewah mentioned that some of the perpetrators had moved to other locations, some were affected by 'spirits' and became unwell, and some had even come to show remorse to their victims.

4.3 Coping with election violence

For all our participants, 'everyday life' ended when a new round of elections and campaigns opened. Many had directly experienced election violence in 2008 and some of our older participants also remembered events from 2002. All participants agreed that the 2013 elections had been far less violent, but violent incidents did occur in some places, young people were mobilised to attend rallies, and the majority had experienced intimidation. In Mashonaland, the youth from Murewah and Goromonzi reported that those involved in intimidation simply reminded people

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29 Focus group, boys, Rangemore, 5 June 2013.

30 Focus group, girls. Tsholotsho, 3 June 2013.

31 Individual interview, girl from Murewah, 3 December 2013.

of the violence in the past to 'keep them in line'. They referred to 'giving people short sleeves', which implied the cutting off of hands and arms by way of warning.[32]

During the election period the usual tactics such as withdrawal from the public sphere and avoidance are sometimes insufficient. Other tactics are required, including leaving the home area, hiding, varying degrees of compliance with forced participation in party activities, and sometimes participation in violence. In the focus group discussions in Phase 1, none of the participants came out to us that s/he had participated in violence and they mainly talked about coerced participation. In Phase 2, some participants told their stories in individual interviews, which showed the complexity of their navigation: some had voluntarily opted to fight in MDC groups or ZANU-PF militia, for some their participation in youth militia was totally under coercion, and some had managed to avoid 'doing the worst' even when coerced into perpetrating violent acts.

Temporary migration to towns or other regions in Zimbabwe thought to be less violent was one form of 'exit' (Barter 2012); it was a strategy mentioned by a few of the participants. For instance, three girls from Murewah said their mother had sent them to stay with relatives in Harare during the 2013 elections. Especially in Matabeleland, migrating to South Africa was mentioned as a tactic adopted by some young people. However, only three of our participants stated that they themselves had left for South Africa because of election violence and it was not possible to estimate the total number who had done this. Youth from Tsolotsho reported that some of the youth who had participated in the violence in 2008 left for South Africa afterwards, feeling uncomfortable about what they had done. Participants also reported, however, that some of them had returned prior to the 2013 elections, looking for opportunities to gain from from them.

When speaking about themselves, participants felt that forced recruitment was a major barrier to staying out of election politics and violence. They stated that boys were more often targeted than girls, who can hide in the house. On the other hand, girls felt they more quickly became victims of sexual abuse when they were targeted. The young people said there was little one could do in the case of coerced participation. A degree of compliance was deemed necessary. Sometimes, joining youth militias was a strategy to avoid becoming a victim. Stories about events in past elections or direct experiences with violence compounded the fear of being harmed. The following quotes are from Goromonzi, where 2008 election violence left a strong imprint.

> Just recently in March 2013 I was forced to do ZANU-PF slogans and sing war songs at the beer hall. It was embarrassing and scary at the same time but I had no choice. I was threatened with assault and I have seen them doing that to others so was really scared for my life. Intimidation also happens during grain distribution exercises in the community. People suspected for being opposition supporters are blatantly told that they would not benefit from the grain and war veterans and youth militias will be very active at the distribution. So, one has to be careful not to be seen to be supporting the MDC if you want to benefit from government programmes. We also have to pretend to like what ZANU-PF is

32 Individual interview, girl from Kuwadzana, 29 November 2013.

> doing because we also want to benefit from the council land and properties that locals can benefit. If you are known to be MDC you don't benefit at all.[33]
>
> I can see that if I don't do what they want they will take away my farm. I cannot leave the farm, because my father is now old and I have to be in charge so I have to toe the ZANU-PF line to keep it. I engaged in [election] politics in 2001. I was part of the youth that raided farms and committed acts of violence. We would beat up MDC supporters. Recently towards elections [2013] we were forced to tell people that they should vote 'correctly'.[34]

However, even when coerced into participation, some young people would try to limit the extent or length of their involvement. This girl from Goromonzi explained:

> There used to be a youth base by the shops in Goromonzi in 2008. One day when my friend and I went to the shops, they [ZANU-PF party youth] called us to the base. […] They said they would use us to go to homesteads where people were deemed to be opposition members and we would take their livestock and food so as to feed the people at the bases and also to beat defectors so that they would come back to the ruling party. I think we went to about three villages and at the fourth one my friend and I ran away under the pretext that we were going to the shops.[35]

When speaking about other youth, or 'ordinary youth', participants acknowledged there are certainly large numbers of young people who engage in party activities for material benefit, or hopes thereof, including involvement in party-orchestrated violence. They have a nickname for such opportunistic youth: 'the two-Rands', referring to the two South African Rand they are paid for joining in. Participants related the high levels of unemployment among youth and not having anything to do directly to how easily politicians could 'appropriate' young people. With just a little money, t-shirts and party regalia young people can be persuaded to join rallies, to mobilise others to join in, and to engage in violence. In urban areas like Kuwadzana, politicians would make use of the high prevalence of addiction, giving young people alcohol and drugs in exchange for their involvement. Our participants viewed the NYS graduates as different from the opportunistic 'ordinary youth' who get involved during elections. They referred to NYS youth as 'youth militias' more consistently, they regarded them as more embedded in ZANU-PF structures than ordinary young people, and as being, in between election periods, part of the state machinery that excluded opposition supporters when it came to distribution of fertilisers and food aid.

As mentioned in Section 2.3 on research methodology, few of our participants admitted to having taken part in violence during elections and obviously, those who did, would not readily admit they had done so for opportunistic reasons. The majority spoke about their participation as being coerced, while MDC activists emphasised the need for self-defence. At the same time, this study provides sufficient evidence to argue that material interest is not the only explanation for youth's involvement in

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33 Focus group, boys, Goromonzi, 17 July 2014.

34 Individual interview, boy from Goromonzi, 2 December 2013.

35 Individual interview, girl from Goromonzi, 2 December 2013.

election violence. Furthermore, the study shows there is a large group of young people who try to resist becoming involved in election violence.

4.4 Instances of citizen agency

4.4.1 Doing some good in alternative spaces

Many of the participants saw 'the lack of something to do' as a reason for young people being enticed by party politics. Starting activities in the informal economy was therefore not only a livelihood strategy, but for many also a way of staying out of politics. Although parts of the informal economy in some areas may also be politicised, there is room to develop economic activities independently of the systems of patronage. For the boys, engagement in sports activities was another way to keep off the streets. Politicians would attempt to have control over the organisation of soccer games and 'claim' them for their party, but most of the boys considered soccer games as neutral spaces where people should not bring in party politics.

In two out of the six research sites young people had started initiatives that developed into forms of citizen engagement in community life. In Goromonzi, the local residents' association had set up a youth chapter to encourage young people to start development projects and small-business initiatives, like planting potatoes or brick-moulding. Encouraged by adult members of the association, some of the youth were forming groups. Several of our Goromonzi participants were members of this youth club. They felt their participation could hopefully lead to alternative livelihoods, and at the same time it might keep them away from politicians with the wrong intentions.

In Magwegwe, a group of young people had started an informal school and organised classes in a room rented out by a local church. They helped students and school drop-outs to prepare for their 'O' levels. Also in Magwegwe, young people had started arts clubs and dance groups. They came together for rehearsals in the local community centre and tried to generate income through performing at festivals and private parties. As with the youth club in Goromonzi, participants emphasised that these groups helped them to improve not only their own lives, but also that of their communities, in a context of high unemployment and political polarisation. These arts groups had to navigate the political environment just as individuals did. In the run-up to elections the members had been approached to perform for election candidates. They had refused as they wanted to stay neutral, even if that meant less access to resources and future opportunities. They also had to deal with patronage practices when interacting with the arts councils and registration procedures. What characterises these groups is the strong social network among their members, who do not just do arts activities together but look after one another as a 'surrogate family'. This helps them stay strong, even when they face political threats. Participants in these groups claimed that the groups and their activities were apolitical, but they did feel that they represented an alternative to the ways in which party politics enforces itself upon the youth. Seen in that light, the groups are small acts of resistance. All in all, these initiatives offered hope and alternative spaces for engagement.[36]

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36 The conditions under which these emerged, and the forms of social leadership that enable the functioning of these groups, will be discussed in detail in a future IDS Practice Paper by Pettit (forthcoming 2015).

4.4.2 Resistance and defiance

The participants unanimously agreed that it was very hard to openly resist the systems of state repression and forms of structural violence. The majority of our participants could not think of examples in which youth had 'come out' against systemic violence, apart from when violent clashes erupted between party youth from different parties. Yet, several examples of acts of resistance and defiance did emerge.

In Kuwadzana, MDC-T youth had openly confronted ZANU-PF youth when ZANU-PF wanted to claim a library for the party during the 2013 election campaigns. The public library had been built with donor funds when Learnmore Jongwe (MDC) was MP. MP Nelson Chemisa (MDC-T) had allocated resources to furnish and equip the library. The aspiring ZANU-PF candidate tried to claim the library for his campaign, by using the opening ceremony as a ZANU-PF function. MDC-T youth, including several of our participants, mobilised through WhatsApp.[37] They also called in back-up from MDC-T youth at the provincial level. They protested at the ceremony in large numbers, removing ZANU-PF posters from walls. The function had to be abandoned, before the situation escalated into violence.

A boy from rural Murewah told us he was part of a group of community members who are excluded from the distribution of fertiliser by their headman. One day, they decided to hold their own gathering when the headman had called a meeting. Our participant labelled this an act of defiance. The group then decided to go out into the forest area that is designated for the headman, and they collected wild fruits as an act of protest, because it is forbidden to do so. Unfortunately this led to a backlash, because the headman called the police and people were harassed.

In one of our research sites there is a female activist who is part of an activist women's organisation. She is often harassed by security agents and was a victim of political violence in the 2008 elections. The young people reported that community members try to protect her. When residents see that security agents are hanging around her house they secretly tip her off, so she can escape over the fence. These instances, even when small, can be significant to those who take part in them. 'Weapons of the weak' (Scott 1985) can build a sense of solidarity among the marginalised who face repression and strengthen them as they realise that their grievances are legitimate.

4.5 The party activists

A few of our participants from Mashonaland labelled themselves as 'activists'.[38] We had a number of ZANU-PF and MDC-T activists from rural Murewah, and MDC-T activists from urban Kuwadzana – both boys and girls. They called themselves 'activists' for their connections with the party and adult party members and for their voluntary involvement in campaign activities. Asked about their motivations, none

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37 In all sites we asked whether social media offered 'safe spaces' for political expression. Urban youth are better connected to the internet and mobile phone networks. However, most of them commented that one might read political debates, but would not 'like' them on Facebook or comment on them in a way that might expose one's identity to state surveillance systems. Internet and closed user groups may offer possibilities, but young people do not consider them to be an entirely safe space.

38 None of our participants from Matabeleland labelled themselves as activist, but we do not want to suggest any relationship between this region and levels of activism on the basis of our data set.

of them said they were driven primarily by material gain. The ZANU-PF youth from Murewah felt strongly about Mugabe as the 'father' of the nation and ZANU-PF as the right party, whereas MDC-T supporters were considered sell-outs of the country. Interestingly, in one of the focus groups with the Murewah girls, their reasons for supporting ZANU-PF emerged when discussing the term 'born-free', which for them had positive connotations:

> **[P2]** Being born free means we are now able to speak our minds and we should be heard. We should be able to effect change on some of the policies. Our elders tell us that they were downtrodden before independence and could not rise to protest against oppressive policies but now, things have changed. People are now flexible to form and follow their own political parties.
>
> **[P1]** Things are much better now [since independence]. The level of education has improved. Most of our parents are illiterate but almost everyone in the younger generation is literate. I can even greet a white man! This shows that things have changed for the better.
>
> **[P3]** Before independence, life was hard. Blacks were disregarded and enslaved by the white men. We are now called born-frees because we were born when the trouble was over, through the sacrifice of the heroes. They sacrificed their lives to get us where we are today. […] Now, we have the free will and we can make our own decisions. The sky is the limit nowadays. However, we are not very free because we are downtrodden so we are half free.
>
> [P4] I love to be called born-free because I am free to do what I want without any reservations. I am now able to wear decent clothes and not the ancient clothes which were worn in the ancient days. The days where the Musengabere practice was rampant have been since subdued by modern marriages. Nowadays everyone is free to marry or elope with whom she loves.[39]

To a certain extent this discussion reflects the perceptions urban youth have about rural youth: that in rural areas, the youth are not exposed to information and will easily believe the ZANU-PF rhetoric they hear from war veterans, party leaders and headmen.

Many of the MDC-T youth declared that they 'just want change' and – seeing ZANU-PF as the main cause of state repression and economic decline – they felt that change was possible only through MDC-T. Especially among the MDC-T youth, strong social ties were important for mutual support to deal with security threats and with life challenges more generally. MDC-T youth from Kuwadzana and Goromonzi had directly experienced violence during the 2008 elections. In Goromonzi, the youth reported that they moved only in groups in their area and at night they would sleep in one house so they could defend themselves. Youth from Kuwadzana had kept a 'low profile' in 2013 to avoid new violence, and had agreed among themselves not to join in any violent activity. All of them were extremely disappointed with the 2013 election results and were unsure about what to do next.[40]

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39 Focus group, girls, Murewah, 26 August 2014.

40 These discussions happened only three months after the elections and in the subsequent twelve months MDC-T faced serious challenges to its credibility as an opposition force.

A number of those who had been active for a political party emphasised it had offered them opportunities to develop themselves, usually in terms of leadership. For instance, for the drawing exercise that reflected ‘a moment of empowerment’ several participants had drawn a self-portrait. They showed themselves standing on a small stage and speaking at a political meeting, or mobilising others for campaigns. These activities had given them a sense of recognition and respect within an organised structure. Some of them had drawn themselves when they were heads of their class at school. Other than that, the opportunities for gaining skills and confidence in organised youth collectives are scarce. In this light, involvement in political parties to some extent counters a sense of social and political exclusion among certain young people.

Box 4.1 The story of a community activist

Adam’s story is another example of how agency develops over time through social interaction and events. Adam joined a labour union when he was young, which helped him become aware of economic and political oppression, as people were fired from work without receiving any benefits. He joined the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions and learnt about the problems of unemployment and labour rights. He joined the food riots of the 1990s and participated in stay-aways and strikes, which made him lose his job. His role model then was Tendai Biti, who he described as young and vibrant and whom he admired for his political ideology. He learnt a lot from his friends, with whom he exchanged ideas and advice. He joined MDC and had a position within the party structures.

The 2008 elections formed a critical juncture when he was targeted for his involvement in MDC by ZANU-PF militia. He was abducted and taken to a secret location where he was assaulted and was shown bodies of dead people. He was forced to admit his engagement in MDC and reveal the names of everyone involved in opposition politics in his area. When he complied with these demands, he was released and went home. He had given in to his captors in order to protect his family, which was in danger. His father gave him some money and he left his area for some time. His relatives, especially his parents, were isolated by other members of the society at social gatherings because of his involvement. The situation started to calm down after elections, and Adam returned home. His ward councillor was MDC. The youth in Adam’s area started getting involved in income-generating projects like carpentry and welding, and he took part in these. He received training and was provided with a welding machine plus a loan from the bank.

Adam attended some workshops at Silveira House, where he learnt about how to deal with violence. He said he and other participants were ridiculed by his friends and comrades who thought they were cowards. Sometimes he and his friends thought of retaliation, but they were afraid of the consequences. It would not have stopped the violence but only increased it. In the lead-up to the 2013 elections he became active for a CBO that carried out activities aimed at community healing. He said he was probably the most active person in his ward, organising youth from across the political divide in meetings to discuss and encourage peaceful elections. He engaged the chiefs, the political leadership and the church leaders as well. His family was suspicious at first, thinking he had defected to ZANU-PF, but later they started to support him.

Adam’s trajectory shows the importance of role models, friends and family, of experience gained through collective action and events. He eventually left party politics, but now he takes his experience elsewhere whenever he is offered a space for building citizen agency.

5 Conclusions

This research report has described how youth from six different places in Zimbabwe experience their citizenship. It has discussed the various forms of violence they experience in everyday life and during the turbulence of elections, it has shown how they respond to forms of violence, and has indicated the important factors that inform their agency. This final section summarises the findings about how violence and politics are entangled, and how young Zimbabwean citizens exercise agency in response to violence in their everyday lives. The section finishes with recommendations for civil society organisations and policymakers aiming to work with young people to improve their lives and the prospects for democracy in Zimbabwe.

In terms of a sense of citizenship, the findings show that Zimbabwean youth share the experience of being second-class citizens with their peers in many other African countries (Honwana 2011). They feel let down by the political systems that have failed to create employment and are failing to maintain good-quality levels of education. The findings also show differences within Zimbabwe. The youth in Mashonaland and Matabeleland share a sense of marginalisation, but the Shona youth see themselves as Zimbabweans, while the Ndebele youth feel they do not even belong to Zimbabwe. This lack of a sense of citizenship has historical reasons and young people strongly believe that the regime has cut off Matabeleland because of its support to the opposition. Yet within Mashonaland, rural youth feels marginalised compared with urban youth. Thus, while several of our young participants supported ZANU-PF there is a sense of disappointment about what the regime has failed to do for youth. Also, the horizontal relations between youth and society, among youth and within families are important for their citizenship. Young people feel excluded by older generations, including older family members, they feel their opinions are not valued and that they are denied a voice. To a certain extent, political party structures offer a sense of community and belonging, in a society that offers few opportunities to young citizens to develop themselves. This explains the relationship between the youth identity, one marked by social and political exclusion, and the readiness among some youth to be part of a violent political system.

This study showed how political violence is viewed and experienced by youth. Participants had a deep awareness of how violence and politics are entangled, before, during and after elections. They emphasised that political violence peaked during the period of elections, and it included highly visible forms of physical violence, coercion and intimidation. A few months after elections the situation settles, although political intimidation of (suspected) opposition supporters never completely subsides and the permanent sense of being under surveillance is part of ordinary life. The extent to which intimidation of the opposition is experienced as a real threat in everyday life varies according to location and the local political context. Thus, in Mashonaland, the youth feel more often intimidated by state security actors like the police, even if they are not politically active for the opposition. In Matabeleland intimidation is perceived as less of a problem once elections are over. In Magwegwe and Rangemore the situation eases significantly. However, young people associate the presence of state institutions staffed by Shona people with the regimes's determination to maintain a degree of control.

This is compounded by what they know about Gukurahundi and experiences of the 2008 elections. Factors such as ethnicity and party affiliation come together in a place like urban Magwegwe, where the youth are often harassed by the Shona police force because they speak a different language, but also, in the background is the fact that the Shona are associated with the regime. Young people always remain cautious, especially in Thsolotsho.

The report has described the numerous forms of violence that youth experience in everyday life, as well as the election violence. Young women and girls are more concerned with everyday violence like domestic violence, social exclusion based on gendered norms, and crime and violence, than the political violence, which is 'seasonal'. Many young people face problems that are caused by various types of of structural violence. They are aware that certain forms of structural violence are politicised, such as exclusion from jobs, loans and land ownership based on party membership. Exclusion strategies vary across locations, depending on the sources of livelihood in each place. Thus, rural youth associated with the opposition are excluded from access to land and agricultural inputs, while urban youth are more likely to face difficulties when trying to run a market stall or to get a loan to start up a business. Other forms of structural violence are not caused by party politics, for example, social exclusion by older generations. All youth, regardless of party affiliation, share the view that young people are inadequately represented in formal political institutions. Even though ZANU-PF youth are relatively closer to state power, they note that younger people are not in strategic positions. Youth from Murewah felt they were excluded from economic opportunities despite their support for ZANU-PF and thought that all economic opportunities were concentrated in urban areas.

Young people generally perceive the public sphere to be unsafe because of the deep division between ZANU-PF and the opposition parties (more so now that the opposition is weakening), and the presence of state security actors and party-affiliated actors like party youth, NYS graduates and war veterans. The public sphere has narrowed, because certain topics that are central to it (such as government performance, national politics) are avoided in public conversations. As this study has shown, there is variation across youth sub-identities and across locations. In rural Murewah, the youth supporting ZANU-PF do not experience the public sphere as totally unsafe, because generally they do not make critical comments about the government, whereas those who support MDC have to be very cautious. Also in Goromonzi, where ZANU-PF has a strong interest and where relations between party supporters are tense, MDC supporters need to be careful. In urban Magwegwe and peri-urban Rangemore, Matabeleland, young people are less worried because they have grown up in areas that have been MDC-dominated since 2000. In rural Thsolotsho, however, the youth are very cautious. Despite MDC being in control of local government, young people adjusted their discourses in public, but also even in the private sphere of the home; this apparently excessive caution can be attributed largely to the fact that the young people have been raised by a generation of parents and grandparents who experienced Gukurahundi.

The findings of this study challenge the notion that the public and private spheres are strictly separated. In all sites, young people experience the state of constant surveillance as an encroachment on their private sphere. A phrase like 'the walls

have eyes and ears' reflects how the state has invaded the private sphere of the home. Whether this is true or a mere perception, the effect is that some young people are reluctant to discuss politics at home. The private sphere has thus been transformed into an 'invaded' or 'state-captured' sphere, limiting freedom of expression at home. Altogether, the young people felt there was a real lack of public space for them to get together and interact, whether in terms of physical spaces or of opportunities. Many of our participants commented that the only time they felt free to interact with one another was in the series of focus groups organised for this study, or at workshops organised by local NGOs.[41] They acknowledged that the politicisation of the public sphere was a major problem, which made it difficult to get to know each other and to overcome the volatility of political divisions.

Different forms of violence require different responses. The findings suggest that the agency adopted by youth varies because there is variation in the patterns and intensity across rural, peri-urban and urban areas. Within locations, variation in agency is most likely explained by gender and age; younger boys and girls are less exposed than those aged 18 and above, who are more likely to be targeted by political actors. The report has demonstrated a range of possible responses to political violence. In everyday life, the most common strategy used by young people is strategic avoidance of places and actors associated with political violence, and avoidance of conversation topics that might attract the attention of security agents. When political intimidation intensifies around the time of elections, girls try to shut themselves away by hiding at home. For boys, who in everyday life are much more present in public spaces and more mobile, it is easier to temporarily leave their area. For everyone, forced participation in party activities is hard to resist, especially when door-to-door campaigns are organised. However, even when participation is coerced, many young people try to maintain some control over the level or duration of their participation.

The report has highlighted the factors that shape youth's responses to politics and violence. It emphasised that social background, especially family and friends, has a strong impact on young people's attitude to the political environment generally and to violence in particular. Family members and friends 'teach' them tactics to avoid or deal with violence. In addition, prior experience of violence during the 2008 elections had left a strong impression on many young people. Some opted for complete disengagement after an experience of violence, while others were motivated to become more engaged in politics. Family and friends can also encourage youth involvement in politics, especially when an older family member is already involved. In addition, it must be noted that involvement in a political party – especially when in some sort of leadership position – is appealing to some young people, because they gain respect, recognition and experience from it. In a context where young people experience social exclusion and where alternative forms of youth mobilisation are scarce, political parties thus offer more than just material incentives.

Where there are positive instances of citizen agency, such as the alternative school and arts clubs in Magwegwe, these share certain characteristics. First of all,

41 Because we had accessed the six sites through two NGOs involved in community healing, some of the youth knew about these two organisations. Only the youth from Thsolotsho (Matabeleland) had participated in activities run by other NGOs.

the strong social relations among the participants were important for carving out and protecting these safe spaces. Second, these activities combine livelihood activities with social engagement. Third, they are activities that do not confront the regime but seek to circumvent it, and thus subvert it. Finally, those involved seek constructive relationships with parents to gain support in the community.

Thus, this report demonstrates that one needs to look at the broader social context in which youth is embedded to understand how they deal with polarisation, politics and violence. Youth empowerment programmes tend to emphasise the creation of employment and livelihoods as a strategy to mitigate youth involvement in violence. In other words, they focus on economic inclusion and economic empowerment to make young people into better citizens. This is important, but the findings of the study point at a number of issues currently neglected by such an approach: (1) this approach will not tackle social and political exclusion; (2) it overlooks the importance of social relations among young people and between them and their families, which encourage or discourage political engagement (including involvement in violence). In other words, economic empowerment strategies are sufficient for nurturing youth to become democratic citizens and need to be complemented with other strategies.

A key recommendation of this report is to view active citizenship among Zimbabwean youth as a priority area for interventions by government, civil society and aid actors that needs a diversity of approaches and strategies. This requires a shift in thinking about the position of youth in society and what makes young people active and capable citizens. Youth are not just a reservoir of labour with economic potential. They also have ideas and the potential to address violence and polarisation in Zimbabwean politics and society. The question is what kind of exposure and support do they need to unlock this potential. Young people have highlighted, in this study, that their structural exclusion from equal citizenship undermines their agency. Therefore interventions need to address all dimensions of exclusion: the social, economical and the political. Social relationships among young people and between them and their communities need to be strengthened for youth to feel supported in playing a full role as citizens. Supporting the political participation of youth requires local and national government to design and implement interventions that take account of young people's views. Clearly, more is required than the often highly localised initiatives that bring youth together in sports clubs and savings schemes. These do not respond either to the magnitude of the problems faced by young people, or to young people's ambitions and potential.

This leads to the following specific recommendations for youth programmes:

1. Youth want and need opportunities to meet and interact socially outside the deeply politicised arena. If well organised and protected from political party activities, this can establish a social foundation for learning and practising how to discuss issues of public concern, bridge political divisions, and take collective action.

   Young people would like to have the opportunity to interact, to gain social leadership skills and develop life skills. They need to be seen as agents who can take on issues of public concern, debate and organise. Well-trained facilitators that are able to unite youth, facilitate public dialogue and encourage and guide collective action are of crucial importance. Ultimately, these

activities need to transform a political culture among youth from one that is characterised by suspicion and antagonism to one of trust and collaboration.

There are examples of community centres and youth centres where youth groups have initiated their own activities and maintained a neutral space. It is possible to build on this experience and introduce new activities and attract a broader group of young people. But one can also imagine a range of spaces where young people could be exposed to debate and social interactions: universities, youth centres, sports clubs, theatres, music studios, festivals, internet cafes and IT hubs. A risk that needs to be addressed, however, is that such spaces become politicised when party-affiliated actors try to appropriate initiatives.

2. Devise strategies that build ‘citizen capabilities’ among youth such as civic leadership, dialogue and collective action around issues of public concern, and build young people’s experience in accessing and negotiating with public authorities.

   Starting points for encouraging debate and collective action are issues that matter to youth, such as security in public spaces, sexual and reproductive health facilities, the quality of education, and vocational training opportunities. Collective action as well as citizen agency can be stimulated: what can *we* do as young people and how do we liaise with *public authority* to play its part? Even livelihood activities can be organised in a way that they nurture leadership and collaboration among young people, forms of representation, and connections with, for example, local government actors, councillors, youth ward officers and headmen.

3. Build social relationships and between youth and communities to overcome social exclusion.

   To enhance the position of the country’s youth, families and communities need to be involved in efforts that recognise the value, perspectives and capacities of young people. This will require a variety of approaches. One example would be to facilitate dialogue between young people and parents and community leaders. Where youth initiatives have been developed, expanding these and showcasing them to their community might help to shift the community’s perspective to one that appreciates its youth.

   Social marginalisation of youth is strongly gendered. To enhance the position of young women, change needs to happen in the domestic as well as the public sphere, involving families as much as male youth.

Interventions cannot be implemented without due attention being paid to the adverse political context. In the current political climate there is not much room for progressive changes in the political culture of governance and the mechanisms of state repression. To nurture youth as democratic citizens, certain issues need to be addressed that are highly sensitive and politicised: the structural marginalisation of Matabeleland, a truth and reconciliation process for victims of Gukurahundi, the deep-rooted systems of patronage, the entrenched interests of political elites – down to the very local level of the headmen – and a culture of impunity. The above-proposed recommendations will not directly, and definitely not immediately,

tackle such big and systemic issues. Nor is it desirable to make young citizens solely responsible for addressing such challenges. Rather, the proposed strategies may contribute to nurturing a generation of citizens who are able to imagine a different country and democracy, and are able to relate and engage peacefully with their peers and others so as to take steps towards realising that aspiration.

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