

# Exposure of Rural Youth to Violence

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## Abstract

Guruve Growth point is defined by youth violence during political election times. The study therefore sought to establish youth participation in violence and related implications thereto. The study was qualitatively conducted in an exploratory way. Interviews were used to collect data from 30 youth purposively sampled. Content analysis employed within the realm of the Grounded Theory was used to analyse data. The study was guided by the Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory. The study found out that there were youth problem behaviours across societies defined by violence. It also identified some of the factors influencing youth violence. Political youth violence has created a cycle of violence and unending hostilities amongst neighbours based on political orientation. A culture of tolerance and co-existence has to be gradually inculcated into the youth from the basic socialisation institutions to address youth violence.

**Keywords:** Youth violence, political violence, participation, growth point, rural areas, exposure

## 1. Introduction

Youth violence is a daily challenge to both families and the central government. It is a problem that various stakeholders have sought different techniques to address but with little success. Youth violence studies and statistics from the responsible law enforcement agencies indicate that while the challenge is all over, it is more rampant and life threatening in the urban areas. According to Reeler (2009); RAU (2012); Dodo & Msorowegomo (2012:134-143) and Dodo et al (2016a:208-219), youth in urban areas are at higher threat to exposure to violence. The same studies however approximate that between 20 and 35% of rural youth and about 60 to 90% of the urban youth have either seen or experienced some form of violence in their community respectively. However, in this study, focus is on the rural areas where the majority (70.3%) of the population in Zimbabwe lives (Zimstats 2015).

Youth violence has been reported in various forms and impacting differently on its targets. Studies show that while violence manifests in different forms, there are specific forms in which most prominent youth violence emanates. In this study, specifically political violence is the subject.

## 2. Background

Violence is a problem in most communities especially in the developing world where economies are not healthy enough to sustain most basic social services. This is the case with most rural areas in Zimbabwe. Guruve growth point represents most rural service centres in Zimbabwe in terms of social service quality, politics of the economy and other aspects around morality, local governance and religious systems. Guruve is 150 kilometres to the north of Harare and borders with Mazowe to the south, Muzarabani to the east, Mashonaland West to the west and Mbire to the north.

Traditionally, the area was sustained by commercial farming and stone sculpturing before the 2000 Land Reform programme transformed the economic structure. While Guruve district has a population of over 50000, the study specifically focuses on the Growth point which has a population of over four thousand people (Zimstats 2015). Ideally, it is supposed to grow towards a town status. Unfortunately, because of the state of the economy, the area has been gradually deteriorating with more people turning into vending and prostitution. According to 2012 national census, the youth in this administrative ward (Guruve Suoguru ward) constitute 65% of the total population (Zimstats 2012). Of the youth constituency, females make up over 53%. Zimstats (2015) also reports that unemployment in the rural areas is 99% while in the case of the youth, it is 100%.

The Growth point has traditionally been a ZANU PF dominated area till the 2000 election when MDC won the local government ward elections thus transforming the political system in the area. Basically tables turned. This new political dispensation created a hostile environment where youth from the two opposing political parties; ZANU PF and MDC openly declared their enmity and intolerance of each other. This hostility was sealed during the 2008 political violence era when hundreds of youth clashed leaving several injured and dead, raped and robbed. Various properties were destroyed and relationships severed. In most of the conflicts and acts of violence, it was the youth who were on the fore-front purportedly defending their political parties' interests.

## 3. Methodology

The study was qualitatively conducted in an exploratory way. Individual in-depth structured interviews following a standardised script were held with 30 youth aged between 20 and 30 years with a mean age of 25

years. Twenty-one were males ( $n=21$ ) and nine were females ( $n=9$ ). Eleven were customarily married and none was formally employed. The researchers conducted the interviews which lasted for an average of one hour to one hour thirty minutes and the participants were identified through the political youth leadership in the local area. All the participants were purposively sampled for their knowledge of youth violence and the long duration of their stay in the areas under study. It was ensured that participants had lived in the area of study for at least 10 years and had either seen or suffered violence. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. Of the 30 participants, sixteen males ( $n=16$ ) and six females ( $n=6$ ) had attained Ordinary Level secondary education while the remaining had lower education attainment.

The study was based on an anti-positivist inclination which does not believe in width but rather on depth of the data. Sandelowski in Onwuegbuzie & Leech (2007:105–121) argues that sample sizes in qualitative study ought not to be too small that it is hard to attain saturation while at the same time, it must not be too big that it is hard to take on a thorough and case-oriented study. It is actually recommended to have smaller samples to guarantee in-depth and accuracy as supported by Walsh (2003:66-74) and Hellstrom (2008:321-337).

All the transcribed interviews were analysed for emergent themes through content analysis employed within the realm of the Grounded Theory (Strauss & Corbin 1994:273–285). Transcripts were first and foremost examined to find primary coding sets and the variety of themes in every single set. All the necessary study protocols were strictly adhered to with the participants consenting to partake freely.

Interview scripts had the following items for discussion;

- Residence background
- Their understanding of violence
- How they were involved in violence
- The forms of violence experienced
- How violence impacted on their lives.

### *3.1 Theoretical explanation*

The study was guided by the Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory (Bronfenbrenner 1979) which talks about risk factors that exacerbate the probability of exposure to violence. In the context of Gुरुve Growth point, there are various dynamics that determine people's lifestyles which include rural/semi-urban influence, poverty, unemployment, prostitution and polarized politics amongst others. The fact that Gुरुve is historically linked to the 1970's liberation war and that the people are still strongly linked to their cultural and religious practices makes the local community lead a peculiar lifestyle, which does not easily embrace modernity and civilisation.

Some studies cite deprivation of the basic needs as a potential push factor for the youth to participate in violence. It is argued that the deprived youth are often pushed to the limits of society where they end up with little option for survival. According to Gurr (1970) who pioneered the Deprivation theory, the awareness by individuals in a society of dispossession, exclusion, and oppression often leads to resentment and disappointment. Gurr contends that people rise up in response to frustration emanating from the nefariousness of the economic and social discrepancies, which are intricately embedded in society.

There are also other scholars who attribute the involvement of youth in violence to the Broken Windows theory by Wilson & Kelling (1982:29-38). The theory posits that if a community does not provide for appropriate social checks and balances, chances of experiencing more violence are high. This is against the belief that the generality of the youth concerned will be made to think that it is acceptable to engage in violence simply because earlier acts were not reprimanded. It is against some of the above cited factors that the study sought to explore and appreciate some of the influences behind the involvement of the youth in violence.

## **4. Literature Review**

### *4.1 Youth violence*

Various studies suggest that the breeding of violence is often developed upon past real life disgruntlement and dissatisfaction with some aspects of the youth's lives and society in general. Most youth going through this pre-phase normally join hands with other equally disgruntled persons and engage in violence. In most cases, youth violence targets the most vulnerable and defenceless in society. Youth violence refers to an act that is deliberate by the youth to inflict the targeted subject harm (UNDP 2006).

Youth is a life stage whose definition, for programming and policy-making purposes differs from one country to another and from one organisation to another. However, the Zimbabwe National Youth Council defines it as any adolescent between 15 and 35 years of age (GoZ 2013). Often, discussions around youth violence take on board such acts as physical assaults, street battles, psychological torture, sexual assault, theft and robbery, deprivation of some freedoms and vandalism amongst others (Dodo & Mateura 2011).

### *4.2 Violence Exposure*

Violence has always existed in various environments since time immemorial. It has only become a challenge

when it is either inflicted or exposed to the innocent and young people. Exposure to violence through direct victimisation and secondary exposure during infancy and youth puts the youth in danger for various bad behavioural and health consequences (Seal et al 2014). Some of these ugly effects include violent behaviour, despair, anxiety, and declines in academic performance (Lambert et al 2012:1-9).

Dahlberg deriving from Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory (Bronfenbrenner 1979) cites four stages of influence explaining the risk factors that exacerbate the likelihood of exposure to violence as individual, family, peer and environmental factors (Dahlberg 1998:259–272). What basically is clear is the fact that neighbourhood backgrounds contribute to youth risk of exposure to violence.

Researches demonstrate that the earlier a youth joins a life of violence, the longer the youth is likely to commit crime and become a habitual criminal with aggressive and violent predispositions normally extending into adult life (Kethini et al 2004:697–720). Some studies also show that there is some form of delinquency which is hereditary as it could be passed from either of the parents (Schreiber & Schreiber 2002:101–104; Dodo et al 2016b:131-144). The latter form has nothing to do with socialisation except that it probably needs some conducive conditions to trigger it whereas the former takes socialisation for one to engage into violent activities. According to Kethini et al (2004:697–720), the youth who grow up under such violent conditions emulate the practice either from their role models or family members as a noble behaviour before assimilating it into their traits.

Other factors that contribute towards youth violence and chronic offending include poor academic performance and lack of interest in education. According to Moon et al (2010:839–856), elements like school, family and peer closeness, and drug abuse also have a consequence on youth violence. It has also been established that the youth who abandon school are more likely to take part in some form of offence than those who do well (Davalos et al 2005:57–68).

Youth violence can also be a result of social exclusion which is a practice whereby other community stakeholders are systematically deprived and discriminated against because of specific reasons like religion, ethnicity or political orientation (Hilker & Fraser 2009). It is collaborative and multi-dimensional in nature. Because of the gravity of the discrimination, some youth are not accessed to means of survival and lack opportunities that others do enjoy. Social exclusion is also propagated by both formal and informal systems like laws and cultural practices respectively (Honwana & de Boeck 2005). Social exclusion also includes restricted political participation, limited employment opportunities and lack of access to justice amongst others. This is the case with most youth in the rural areas of Zimbabwe who operate on the sidelines of society ultimately getting left out from the conventional facets of life.

## 5. Findings

### 5.1 Residence Background

Participants indicated that they had lived at Guruve Growth point for varying periods from 10 to 25 years. It was also established that they originated from different places but 20 were originally from Guruve district. The figure below presents the various statistics.

Fig. 1 Demographics

Duration	Guruve	Outsider	Male	Female	Married
10	X	X	X X		
11	X X		X	X	
11	X	X	X X		
10	X	X	X	X	
17	X X		X	X	X X
25	X	X	X	X	X
13	X	X	X X		
20	X X		X	X	X
20	X	X	X	X	X
21	X X		X X		X
19	X	X	X	X	X
10		X X	X X		
14	X	X	X	X	X
15	X X		X X		X
18	X X		X	X	X X
<b>30</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>11</b>

### 5.2 Youths' Understanding of Violence

Participants revealed divergent views about what they termed violence in their communities. They indicated that

violence was mainly defined by who perpetrated it, the victim and the gravity of its effects. However, 18 participants defined violence as any act, physical or psychological by a person resulting in the suffering of another. The other twelve indicated that violence is social disorder which often left people hurt.

Twenty-two and eight participants indicated that youth violence was mainly driven by illiteracy and unemployment and a culture of violence and poverty respectively. Twenty six participants revealed that violence often resulted in the destruction of infrastructure and retardation of development. However, the other four indicated that violence was not always bad as it pushed for change and development. They pointed out that most developing societies often go through violence as forces for change. What was interesting in their appreciation of violence was that the two who pointed out that violence was good for change did not originate from Gurube. All the ten who did not originate from Gurube also acknowledged that youth violence was driven by literacy and joblessness.

### 5.3 How they were Involved in Violence

All the 30 participants indicated that they had participated in violence in various ways. The form of participation contextually is as defined by Percy-Smith & Thomas (2009). 15 males and five females ( $n=20$ ) revealed that they had during the 2008 election violence actively participated as youth leaders in various areas within Gurube area. The 15 male participants revealed that they were members of local political bases that identified perceived rivals before persecuting them. They pointed out that theirs were political gangs that were into organised thuggery. Four of the 15 confessed seeing some females being sexually abused by some youth activists. One said this;

‘It is painful even up to this day to explain how it was done. I saw some three youth activists’ gang-raping a young woman who had just disembarked from a commuter omnibus that was travelling from Harare. The three were so rough and militant and never used protection during the sexual attack’

Three females and two males revealed that they had participated in youth violence in different ways. They reported that they had provided with support services to the youth who were in the torture bases. They also reported that they had also morally supported the violence that took place as they believed that it was necessary then from a political point of view.

Seventeen of the 20 participants indicated that though the violence was politically motivated, there were situations that required immediate response; defensive violence and involvement in violence as a way of identifying with the majority side. They pointed out that there were several cases where there was need for defensive violence while isolated cases involved youth who simply wanted to identify with the prevailing political groups for protection. It was revealed that there were real cases when some youth were forced into violence by circumstances beyond their control like poverty, the need for protection and identity and direct coercion. One female youth said;

‘*Ndakangojoinawo base kuti tisarohwe kumba kwedu. Futi kwaive nedoro, kwainakidza*’

(I joined the youth base so that my family could be spared from persecution. Besides, there was lots of beer).

Two females and two males openly revealed that they had been coerced into violence through blackmail. Apparently, their families had some history of allegiance to a rival political party. They indicated that they had been told to join the political bases if they wanted to save their family lives. As soon as they joined the political bases, they were assigned to execute some of the most heinous tasks against innocent and defenceless captured rivals. They revealed that they were told that they too had to partake in violent acts so that they could also become part and parcel of the violence team. There were moments when they were also assigned to go out and rob local vendors of their wares for the sustenance of the bases and the youths’ families back home.

Two males and one female reported that their experience of youth violence came as victims. The two males reported that they had been isolated from a passing omnibus that was heading for the Dande Valley before they were beaten up severely. However, after the beatings, they were detained in the political bases for a night where they were forced to sing and dance the whole night. The woman reported that she had her daughter sexually assaulted by unidentified youth who were never apprehended. She also reported that she had her vegetable wares confiscated from her vending stall at the growth point. She recovered nothing from the looted wares. She said this;

‘*Kwakauya mayouth vachiimba ndookungosviko tora muriwo wese nemadomasi ese andanga ndahodha musiiwoyo. Zvavaisada vakamwararidza pasi ndookuenda. Mapurisa aipfuura, akatya kundibatsira*’

(A group of youth who were singing came to my vegetable stall and looted all the greens and tomatoes. They destroyed the remaining before they left. Police officers who were nearby were hesitant to assist me.)

Six male participants confessed to having participated in violence owing to poverty, unemployment and the need to find survival means. It was revealed that most of the youth who participated in violence often raided food markets with impunity. Three of the six participants added that they were also pushed by a deviant

mentality as they enjoyed partaking in the criminal acts. They also cited adventure and peer pressure as driving factors into violence. The participants revealed that often times, they would be enticed by the excitement and material resources that participating youth would be having and extravagantly expending in public. Some of the flashy materials included beer, meat and other electrical gadgets like radios. One of them revealed the following;

‘I was motivated to join the political youth bases by the need to benefit materially. I knew that there were several material incentives that the youth got from their daily loot.’

Three females and two males indicated that it was out of ignorance of the implications that they joined youth violence between year 2002 and 2008. There were also seven participants who cited limited professional skills, which kept them idle, as a factor for entering into violence gangs. The same participants added that there were also elements of jealousy over accumulated wealth and retribution for incidents and conflicts carried forward from the previous 2002 and 2005 election periods. It was pointed out that each time there were conflicts, the victims would wait for an opportune moment for retaliation. Unfortunately, a cycle of violence was created.

#### 5.4 Forms of Violence Experienced

Participants were asked to describe the forms of violence that they experienced in their communities. Generally, there were three basic types of violence that were identified by the participants; family violence, physical violence and sexual violence.

All the 30 participants indicated that they had at different times witnessed violence especially the following; physical assault, arson, sexual assault and verbal assault. Six females indicated that they had been sexually assaulted by some identified political youths in 2008. Four males confessed seeing some men sexually assaulting some women between 2002 and 2008. One female said;

*Muna 2008 pama election, takanga tarara mumba, tatokotsira apo takanzwa tsoka dzevanhu panze. Takambofunga kuti vanhu vaipfuura. Nenguva, takanzwa musuwo kugogodzwa asi takatya kuvhura. Nenguva, musuwo wakapwanywa, varume vaviri ndokupinda. Takambofunga kuti matsotsi ndokuedza kuvavhundutsira. Ndoopavakabva vationa. Vakaedza kubata ini nemunin'ina wangu. Sezvineiwo, ini ndakapukunyuka ndokutiza. Munin'ina wangu akabatwa chibharo kusvika abuda ropa. Ndakarwadziwa.*

(It was during the 2008 election time when I had gone to bed with my young sister. We heard footsteps outside and initially thought they were passers-by before they started knocking. Before long, they broke in and further thought that they were thieves. As we tried to frighten them away, they tried to rape us. During the melee, I escaped leaving my sister who was subsequently raped. She bled and I was devastated).

Another female participant said this before breaking down;

*‘Vakandibata, vakandiita. Vakandimanikidza.....’*

(The youth raped me....)

There were also 22 participants who indicated that most of the violence that is recorded at the growth point is politically driven. They revealed that outside of election times, the area is quiet and peaceful except for isolated cases of domestic violence. The participants revealed that because of the level of political polarization, the community was so much divided that there was serious hostility and hatred. Some of the people in the community went as far as destroying others' vegetable gardens and robbing vendors of their wares with impunity.

#### 5.5 How Violence Impacted on their Lives.

The study also sought to understand how youth violence had impacted on the generality of the youth community in the area under study. Generally it was reported that violence is bad no matter the cause. All the 30 participants concurred that violence is destructive and divisive. However, 11 participants revealed that violence had built some resiliency in them as they were now able to withstand various pressures and challenges. Seven other participants reported that violence by the youth had given them an opportunity to understand life differently. They had realised that idleness and to some extent, illiteracy had forced neighbours to turn against each other all in the name of politics.

Ten participants reported that violence had forced them to send their school children to boarding schools where they could learn without disturbances and away from getting socialised into thuggish behaviours. They indicated that they were also forced to erect security walls around their residences as a defensive measure. However, in the long run, some of their reactions to violence had brought in development and positive change. One participant said this;

‘We had to send our two children to a local boarding school so that they could not be indoctrinated into violent behaviour and thuggish conduct.’

Thirteen participants lamented the nature of violence that is often experienced at the Growth point since the year 2000. They said that usually the victims of such violence are exposed that they get no protection from the local Police services as the youth involved in violence are well coordinated and resourced. It was given that the

violence had always sowed negative effects on the victims. Some of the adverse mental and emotional effects comprised fear, anxiety and a sense of insecurity. These feelings were displayed through various avoidant actions and hyperawareness of the surroundings.

Seven participants gave out that they were faced with hopelessness and reduced opportunities following the destruction of their lives during some of the violence periods. It was revealed that some people had their homes and properties destroyed while some were internally displaced during which period, they missed on various chances. Eleven participants including all the nine females revealed that the violence that they had witnessed from year 2000 had psychologically traumatised them that they no longer wanted to face such horrific episodes. Resultantly, most of them were as much as possible avoiding being out late at night or alone.

Nine participants reported that they had become accustomed to violence and had accepted it as part of their community lifestyle. They reported that given the frequency and intensity of the violence so far experienced, they had adapted and embraced it. During the process, they had devised retaliatory measures which protected them. Unfortunately, the same retaliatory measures were also some form of violence on the part of the victims. One female participant said;

*'Takatojaira kuti pachauya maelections tinotogadzirira kurwisana. Kana kuri kushandisa demo kana tsvimbo, chero wazvidzivirira. Ukapusa unouraiwa kana kuparadzirwa musha. Kune mamwe mayouth anotumwa nema war vet anemweya, asinganzwe tsitsi. Pakadaro unotosimba.'*

(We are used to fighting during election times. Whatever weapon that we lay our hands on; axes or knobkerries, so long it defends effectively. If you relax, they kill you or destroy all your properties.

Some of the youth who are sent by former liberation war fighters are just evil. In such cases, there is need to fight back in defence).

Eight participants reported that given the intensity of the violence by some youth, self defence is necessary. The participants indicated that most political election times require that citizens be vigilant and jingoistic in mentality as it had become a culture for communities to fight against each other.

## 6. Discussion

Most studies on youth violence focus on youth as offenders. However, adults are also perpetrators and sponsors of violent acts. The study revealed that adults partake in violence on two planes; as direct perpetrators or as sponsors of youth violence. It is the lucrative sponsorship of violence which often exposes some youth into violence. Most youth who are at risk of getting exposed to criminality and violence usually live in challenging situations. Some youth who for different explanations that include poverty, parental negligence, the effects of HIV and AIDS, family breakdown, abusive conditions in the home, or death are neglected or orphaned and lack proper ways of survival, are at highest danger of plummeting into youth criminality and violence as argued by Dahlberg arising from Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory.

The study found out that there are youth problem behaviours across societies defined by geographical areas and groups delineated by education level, gender, employment, earnings and marital status amongst others. It was established that while most of the participating youth are pushed by adults, there was also an element of illiteracy and ignorance of the legal and some cultural rites' implications. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory argues that there are outside factors that influence youths' involvements in violence. From the study, some of these influences emanate from individual homes, local community structure, traditional values and official government systems.

The study established that the youth do indeed participate in violence of various natures and with different implications. What was clearly captured were some of the influences for the involvement of youth in violence. Some of the identified influences include; gangsterism, economic predicaments, political insecurity, unemployment and deviant mentality, illiteracy and limited professional skills, geographical location, family backgrounds, coercion and fear. There were also aspects around jealousy, retribution, peer influence and adventure and the need for association. Therefore, the factors that pushed the youth to participate in violence must be understood from different view-points as they are different.

Contrary to the findings from Kethini et al, (2004:697-720) that the earlier a youth joins violence, the longer they partake in violence, the findings from this study show a different situation. What is coming out clearly is that most of the youth who participated in political violence at Guruve Growth point had no history of violence. Most were responding to the prevailing circumstances. There were two situations that required immediate response; defensive violence and involvement in violence as a way of identifying with the majority side. The latter approach was mainly adopted as a security strategy since there were instances when perceived rivals of ZANU PF were persecuted.

What was also noticeable from the findings was that all the participants who originated from outside of Guruve acknowledged that violence was sometimes good for development and that violence was due to joblessness and illiteracy. To some extent, it may explain the appreciation of the need for education and formal employment by the people from outside of Guruve compared to the locals.

Though only three of the thirty participants had been coerced into youth violence that is a good indication of the goings on during political violence especially in the rural areas where the media and other protective systems like the civil society institutions are non-existent. The fact that social and political structures in the rural areas are largely controlled by the ruling party; locals are manipulated and blackmailed into illegal and heinous acts. Their failure to comply often attracts severe threats and reprimands.

What has been observed from the violence that is often recorded during national political elections and also alluded to in Dodo & Msorowegomo (2012:134-143) is that the Police service is disempowered from carrying out its arresting duties especially if it involves politicized youth from the ruling party. This has often interfered with national security. In most of the violence episodes, the youth are under the direction of some national security agents who provide with financial and material logistics and protection from arrests and prosecution. The involvement of the other security agents renders the role of the Zimbabwe Republic Police's law and order meaningless.

What is clearly disturbing about youth violence especially as it relates to political elections is that instead of ending a jingoistic mentality in the people from the northern part of Zimbabwe where most of the liberation struggle was waged, there is a serious retaliatory mentality. Some of these retaliatory measures were also some form of violence on the part of the victims. Therefore, a cycle of violence had been created over the period with the previous victims seeking to revenge in the coming violence episode or the nearest election period. Unending hostilities have been created amongst neighbours based on political orientation.

## 7. Conclusion

The challenge of youth violence has turned out to be more complex and wide spread especially in the developing world including Zimbabwe. Youth violence prevention programmes in most of these areas do not exist. If ever there is anything on the ground towards youth violence prevention, it is biased towards a particular political side. In other instances, the overall result of these initiatives is pathetic because the systems on the ground are usually not enough to attend to the prevailing challenges. It is therefore the conclusion of the study that there is weak political will on the part of the authorities in as far as eradicating youth violence especially ahead and during national elections.

It is also the study's conclusion that youth violence especially at Guruve Growth point just like several other areas in Zimbabwe, is gradually becoming cultural and is supported by some official systems. Since the attainment of Zimbabwe's political independence in 1980, there are some areas that are characterised by youth violence. Unfortunately, there have not been any meaningful efforts towards addressing the challenge. From the findings in the study, though it is evident that most of the youth who engage in violence would have either seen it at home or have previously participated in political violence, mostly the violence is circumstantial. The youth will be responding to an arising situation. This trend has inculcated a culture of violence in most youth and communities in highly polarized political areas. Similarly, it is also concluded that all the created hostilities based on political orientation have sort of established a cycle of violence which may not end in any foreseeable future unless some deliberate efforts are institutionalized in both the local communities and in the political leadership.

The study concludes that it is important that the civil society institutions engage in awareness programmes that are meant to either reduce or end violence in the rural areas where the traditional leaders are given extra powers to indirectly persecute innocent, defenceless and often illiterate citizens. These initiatives have to be rolled out as a continuous process and partly fused into the school curriculum so that in the long term, the spirit of peace, tolerance and unity may be attained. It has to start at family level, be part of the school curriculum and be fused into religious practices for it to be effectively appreciated and embraced as a societal culture.

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