

6-1-2019

## Participatory Action Research and Prospects for Electoral Conflict Prevention in Zambia

Rose Fumpa-Makano Ph.D.

*The Copperbelt University, Kitwe, Zambia, rose.makano@gmail.com*

Major General Vincent Mbaulu Mukanda (Rtd.)

*The Copperbelt University, Kitwe, Zambia, vmukanda@gmail.com*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.lindenwood.edu/jigs>



Part of the [Anthropology Commons](#), [Critical and Cultural Studies Commons](#), [Environmental Studies Commons](#), and the [Sociology Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Fumpa-Makano, Rose Ph.D. and Mukanda, Major General Vincent Mbaulu (Rtd.) (2019) "Participatory Action Research and Prospects for Electoral Conflict Prevention in Zambia," *Journal of International and Global Studies*: Vol. 10: No. 2, Article 2.

DOI: 10.62608/2158-0669.1473

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.lindenwood.edu/jigs/vol10/iss2/2>

This Essay is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at Digital Commons@Lindenwood University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of International and Global Studies by an authorized editor of Digital Commons@Lindenwood University. For more information, please contact [phuffman@lindenwood.edu](mailto:phuffman@lindenwood.edu).

# Participatory Action Research and Prospects for Electoral Conflict Prevention in Zambia<sup>1</sup>

Rosemary Fumpa-Makano PhD  
Dag Hammarskjöld Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies  
The Copperbelt University, Kitwe, Zambia  
rose.makano@gmail.com

Major General Vincent Mbaulu Mukanda (Rtd.)  
Dag Hammarskjöld Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies  
The Copperbelt University, Kitwe, Zambia  
vmukanda@gmail.com

## Abstract

Although elections are fundamental to democratic consolidation by peacefully electing people to serve in public offices, in many cases they not only bring along ideological contestations but also interparty violent conflicts. Based on a Participatory Action Research (PAR) design, this paper presents field-based lessons on training conducted to curb interparty electoral conflict prior to August 2016 general elections held in Zambia. The study comprised 521 participants from nine political parties which contested in 2016 general elections. Party officials were purposely selected from their provincial, district and constituency level hierarchy. The study aimed at understanding causes for interparty political violence and identifying solutions to address the same. Findings show that major drivers of political violence in Zambia include a deep-rooted “tradition” of practicing politics of intimidation to gain political mileage, political players’ ignorance about electoral laws, weak law enforcement, and poverty (an element that drives the desire to earn a living from any opportunity). Unemployed youths are particularly vulnerable and are abused by the political elites to fan violence at a small fee. The study affirms the importance of action research as a useful bottom-up strategy for conflict prevention, especially in illiberal democracies in Africa.

**Keywords:** Participatory Action Research; Conflict Prevention; Electoral Conflicts; Democratic Consolidation; political violence, Zambia

## Introduction

Elections play a critical part in consolidating democracy. On one hand, they allow political candidates to sell their ideological and policy options to voters; on the other hand, they offer an opportunity to the electorate to freely analyze options presented to them and participate in choosing their preferred political representatives. Through democratic elections, political leaders gain legitimacy and acceptance to govern. While free and fair elections are preferred and promoted, the terrain on electoral campaigns is a highly contested space, especially in emerging democracies. Although the “Third-Wave of Democracy” (Huntington, 1991) of the 1990s transformed the political space in Sub-Saharan African countries, some scholars (Rakner and Svåsand, 2005) argue that several of these countries, including Zambia, have remained stuck in transition and experienced a “transition paradigm” with a stunted democratic culture (Collier, 1999; Carothers, 2002). In part, this stunting becomes evident during electoral cycles, which are characterized by violent contests among contesting political parties, individual political players, their supporters and the citizenry before, during and after elections. The quest to quench and possibly eliminate political violence currently associated with elections has, therefore, increasingly become necessary.

Located in a previously politically turbulent southern African region, Zambia, now a product of the third-wave of democratisation (Baylies and Szeftel, 1992; Rakner and van de Walle, 2009), has generally remained a bastion of peace since attaining its political independence in 1964. However, with the return to multiparty democracy in 1991, incidences of violent interparty electoral conflicts have increased both in their occurrence and intensity. Over time, growing concern has reflected the need for electoral conflict prevention before, during and after elections. Not only is conflict prevention cheaper, more importantly it offers better chances for dialogue among groups or parties in disagreement, thus creating space for arriving at win-win solutions. In this context, conflict prevention helps to create harmonious human interactions and prevents conflict from escalating into full blown wars. Even the United Nations (UN) embraces conflict prevention as an important intervention tool. This is evident, for instance, in the UN’s Charter and its commitment to “preventive diplomacy” espoused by Dag Hammarskjöld, the second UN Secretary General (Ackermann, 2003, p. 340), and Boutros Boutros-Ghali’s “Agenda for Peace” in 1992 (Boutros-Ghali, 1996). The UN, international financial institutions, bilateral aid agencies and even international non-governmental organizations have all incorporated bottom-up strategies into their existing programs (Ramsbotham, et al., 2005, pp. 221-222) to reinforce Foucault’s notion of governing by transforming individual prejudices into cordial relations amongst “ordinary people” as a way of attaining comprehensive peacebuilding (Curle, 1994; Lederach, 1995). Bottom-up interventions build relationships that construct peaceful interactions and these prove to be more sustainable than the usual international peacemaking and peacebuilding policies that focus on political elites and institutional reform. As Zartman (2005) confirmed from his study that conflict prevention is always better and cheaper than mobilizing troops for peacekeeping missions after war has ravaged an area and caused damage to property, human life and human relations. Rebuilding any society that has been through a war is a costly undertaking, hence the need for proactive actions through conflict prevention. This reality inspired undertaking this study, which sought to find out why political party cadres in Zambia fight, especially during presidential contests. Interparty electoral fights have set other countries on fire in Africa (e.g. Cote d’Ivoire, Burundi, Kenya, Sudan, etc.), and if not addressed, Zambia could follow the same political trajectory. To this effect, this study explored the question: What

are the causes of political violence in Zambia? And how can this problem be resolved? What are the solutions?

In addressing this question, a participatory action research (PAR) approach is used to collect information from political party leaders, who are both perpetrators and victims of interparty political violence, depending on who “wins” or “loses” in the conflict. As an approach which uses bottom-up techniques to solve societal problems, PAR was found suitable for this research based on the assumption that political players (as perpetrators of violence) are better placed to explain why they fight (engage in interparty political violence) and would equally be well positioned to prescribe solutions to address this problem (Whyte, 1989).

The study rides on relative deprivation theory (RDT) which posits that when people feel deprived, they are most likely to resort to or support violent means of claiming what they perceive as having been taken away from them (Hegre, Østby and Raleigh, 2009). This study uses a social psychological concept and middle-range relative deprivation theory to undergird the argument for a bottom-up to conflict prevention. In addition, the study also draws on organizational behaviour and group dynamics which explain why people behave the way they do (Olson, 1971). This paper agrees with arguments advanced by deprivation theorists, social psychologists and political science experts on organisational behaviour and group dynamics who argue, among other things, that: i) disadvantaged groups are more likely to support insurgents and political violence to fight against their relative deprivation (Hegre, et al., 2009); ii) people belong to organisations to accrue benefits from their memberships; and iii) group dynamics push people to behave in a particular way, sometimes against their individual objective thinking (Olson, 1971). Two major contributions that come out of this research are that a bottom-up approach is more sustainable in conflict prevention and its resolution, and PAR can effectively be utilized to promote positive behaviour change among political players which may lead to the desired peaceful societal interactions.

### **Brief Historical Context**

Zambia has had six democratically elected presidents<sup>2</sup> since 1964. Mr David Kenneth Kaunda, the first republican president, served the longest term of 27 years in office, a term of office he perpetuated by introducing a one-party state through a constitutional amendment of 25<sup>th</sup> August, 1973, which marked the beginning of a Second Republic (1973-1990). 1964-1973 represents a First Republic. Following Zambia’s economic meltdown in the 1980s and government’s failure to uphold human rights, Zambians advocated for a return to multi-party politics to reclaim their basic freedoms. Hence, in December 1990, a constitutional amendment re-introduced multi-party politics, thus ushering in a Third Republic (1990 to date). David Kaunda was ousted via a ballot box on 31<sup>st</sup> October, 1991, and Frederick Titus Chiluba of the Movement for Multi-party Democracy (MMD) became the second republican president. Since then all presidents have served Zambia within prescribed constitutional term limits, except when death of an incumbent president necessitated holding by-elections, e.g. when Levy Mwanawasa and Michael Chilufya Sata passed on in 2008 and 2014, respectively. In both cases, Zambians went to the polls to elect a new president to complete that term of office. Hence, Zambia appears to have had too many presidential elections in short successions: 2006; 2008 (after Mwanawasa’s death), 2011 (end of Mwanawasa’s five-year term, 2006-2011); 2015 (after Sata’s death in 2014), and then 2016 (end of Sata’s five-year term, 2011-2016). However, a 2016 constitutional

amendment eliminated the need for presidential by-elections; it introduced a presidential running mate who will automatically take over should the incumbent president die in office.

A point worth highlighting is that although Edgar Lungu continued to serve from his first term into his second term, constitutionally his first term of office ended on 19<sup>th</sup> August 2016, a day when the UPND filed in an election petition at the Constitutional Court to challenge 2016 general election results. This is based on a constitutional provision which stipulates that if there is an election petition, an incumbent president shall vacate office and Speaker of the National Assembly shall act as republican president until the case is disposed off (Section 104).

**“Section 104(3)** Where an election petition is filed against the incumbent, under Article 103 (1), or an election is nullified, under Article 103(3)(b), the Speaker shall perform the executive functions, except the power to—

(a) make an appointment; or

(b) dissolve the National Assembly”

(GRZ, Act No. 2 of 2016)

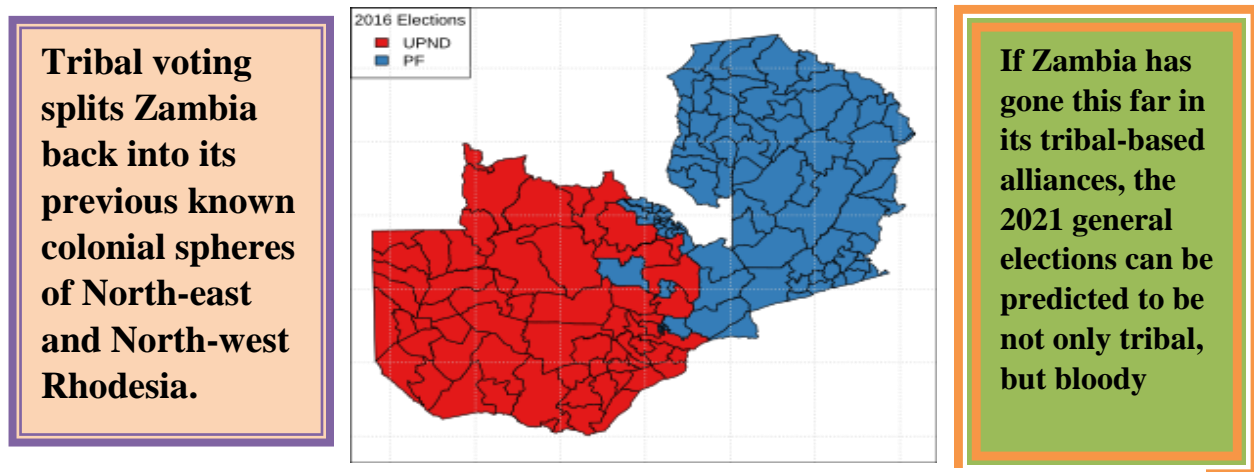
Although political violence in Zambian politics is not new, being one of the reasons advanced for introducing a one party state in 1973 to curb political violence based on tribal lines (Habasonda, 2018), it has been noted that since 2010 political violence has increased both in occurrence and number of people affected.<sup>3</sup> A deadly encounter witnessed in Mufumbwe parliamentary by-election in 2010 between MMD and UPND supporters spoke volumes; that encounter left nine people badly injured and hospitalized (FODEP, 2010). Since then, this trend has worsened, especially during general elections.

On 20<sup>th</sup> September, 2011, Zambia held its general elections and Michael Sata, a 74-year-old veteran politician from Patriotic Front (PF), who rode an anti-Chinese campaign, won the presidential elections defeating incumbent President Rupiah Banda from MMD. Unfortunately, Mr Sata’s tenure was short lived—he died in office on 28 October 2014 and this triggered a presidential by-election to fill the vacancy within 90 days, as Article 38 (1) of the Zambian Constitution stipulates. Mr Sata’s death ignited serious successor infighting within the ruling PF. After a violent intra-party nomination process Mr. Edgar Lungu (current Zambian president) was declared duly elected by the courts as PF nominee for president. Winner of this by-election was to serve a one-year remainder of the term. A presidential by-election was held on 20 January 2015, with Lungu defeating Hakainde Hichilema of the UPND by a narrow margin of 27,757 votes or 1.66% (ECZ, 2015). However, the losing candidate, Mr. Hichilema, was magnanimous enough to accept election results, though he denounced the elections as a sham and urged his supporters to remain calm and prepare for 2016 general elections. With another general election hard on the heels in 2016 and given the narrow margin between winner and loser in 2015 by-election, this voting pattern not only heightened the urgency to mobilize the electorate but also deepened political tensions between PF and UPND; instances of localized electoral violence became common, largely perpetuated by PF party cadres who had an aura of being in charge and above the law. Political violence was increasingly elevated by media coverage, police bias, and legal restrictions which heavily favoured the ruling PF, thus making the political landscape extremely uneven for other political parties (U.S. Department of State, 2015; 2016). Clashes between the PF and opposition supporters moved from verbal exchanges to physical confrontation and in some instances even involved use of firearms and other lethal crude weapons such as pangas (machetes). The death of Mapenzi Chibulo, a UPND supporter shot and

killed on 9 July 2016 by security forces who clashed with opposition supporters protesting against cancellation of a UPND rally in Lusaka (U.S. Department of State 2016, p.2), highlighted government brutality against its own people. Never before had Zambians experienced such political violence as that witnessed in 2015 and 2016 in the run up to 2016 general elections.

The 2015 presidential by-election was highly contested and marked a sad shift in Zambia’s politics; people voted on regional lines of east and north versus south and west,<sup>4</sup> which by extension also reflected tribal voting. The east and northern region predominantly voted for PF, while the south and western region voted for UPND. This trend was repeated in 2016 general elections (**Error! Reference source not found.**), confirming the development of a divided Zambia. 2016 general elections earned a slot history as a year when politicians managed to divide Zambia on tribal lines – Easterners (where PF Party president comes) voted with their tribal cousins in the north, while Southerners (where UPND president comes) voted with their tribal cousins from western and northwest regions of Zambia.

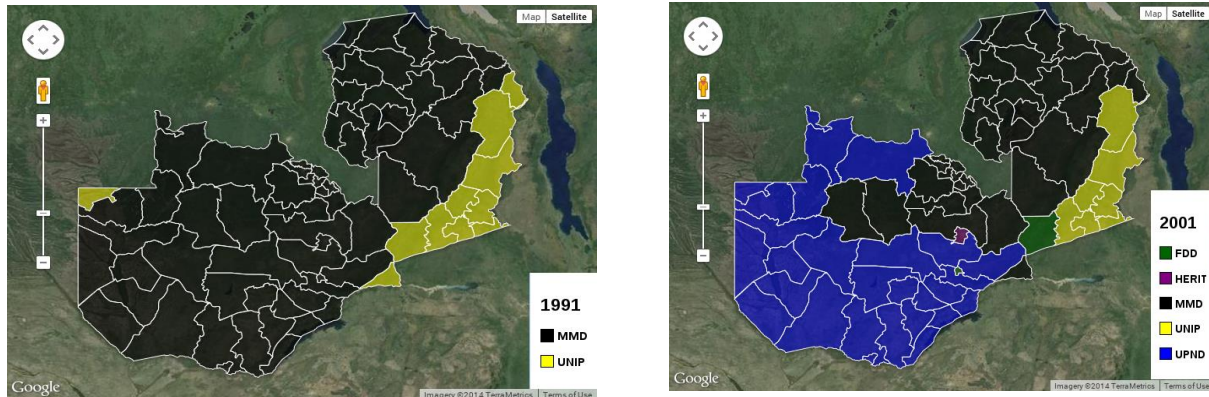
*Figure 1: Voting Pattern of Zambia’s 2016 General Elections*



**Source:** [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016\\_Zambia\\_general\\_election](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Zambia_general_election)

This voting pattern stands in contrast with 1991 general elections, when Zambians united to end a one-party state under the United National Independence Party (UNIP) of Kenneth Kaunda and unanimously voted to re-introduce multi-party politics. Only Eastern Province supported retention of UNIP (Figure 2), possibly because of their connection with UNIP’s party president, who hailed from Malawi and was perceived as belonging to their Chewa-Nyanja speaking group. In addition, this eastern vote could be linked to their identity with Kaunda’s wife (Betty), who came from Eastern Province. Ten years later in 2001, the voting pattern reflects dynamics of multi-party politics in Zambia with MMD and UPND emerging as two front runners (Figure 2). MMD won 2001 general elections against contentious allegations that UPND won the elections, as observed by local and international election monitors who cited serious irregularities ranging from vote rigging to MMD’s improper use of state resources. In January 2002, three opposition candidates petitioned the Supreme Court to overturn MMD’s victory and this case was finally disposed in February 2005 in favor of MMD.

*Figure 2: Zambia: 1991 and 2001 General Elections Voting Patterns*



**Source:** <http://lightonphiri.org/blog/historical-regional-voting-pattern-in-past-zambia-presidential-elections>

Against this sad background, experts in peace and conflict studies found it imperative to get in the political space to understand why political players had thrown civility to the wind. They sought to understand causes of political violence from political players themselves and to solicit their views on how to resolve political violence in Zambia and bring the country back to its peaceful nature. Their motivation rides on the fact that “since wars begin in the minds of men and women, it is in the minds of men and women that the defences of peace must be constructed” (UNESCO, 1945—preamble to UNESCO’s Constitution).

From a backdrop of a highly competitive and contentious January 2015 presidential by-election to pre-election campaigns for 2016 general elections in Zambia, this paper shares field-based experience on the efficacy of Participatory Action Research (PAR) for electoral conflict prevention. This experience is based on the August 2016 Zambian general elections.

This paper argues that using PAR for conflict prevention and resolution is likely to yield more tangible results because, as a bottom-up approach, the PAR processes brings affected people together to identify problems and prescribe solutions to resolve those problems. The interactions promote local ownership of problem-solving and tend to be sustainable (Whyte, 1989). Political rivalry is curtailed because all agree to channel and resolve their differences constructively. We argue that the true nature of conflict prevention is achieved by using the strengths of participatory organizational self-assessment in which subjects of the study “participate with the professional researcher throughout the research process, from the initial design to the final presentation of the results and discussion of their action implications” (Whyte 1989, pp. 368-9). In this case, research participants interacted with researchers for three weeks, sharing their insights on causes of political violence and also offering solutions to the problem.

### **Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The long-term goal of this study was to start building a critical mass of peace envoys within the rank and file of political party players, people equipped with knowledge and necessary skills in conflict prevention and peaceful intra- and interparty electoral conflict resolution strategies. In this regard, the research addressed a desire to inculcate good morals that respond to the national electoral code of conduct (GRZ, 2011) as well as internationally accepted electoral best practices. In the short term, the objectives were five-fold:

1. To enhance interactions and facilitate relationship-building among cadres from different political parties.
2. To promote an understanding that every person has an important role to play in the political space.
3. To impress upon participants that divergent views do not translate into enmity.
4. To promote respect for and protection of human rights in the political space.
5. To build relationships useful for national development.

## Research Design

The study utilized a PAR approach, whose unique strength comes from inclusion of the community or affected people in finding solutions to their problems. PAR has long been recognised for its potential to transform communities because it uses a bottom-up approach and location specific interventions which are mutually agreed upon by affected communities. In conflict prevention and peacebuilding, PAR stands as a critical tool for healing fractured relations and creating peaceful communities (Banks, 2013; Harris, 2017; International Alert, 2017; Kaye, 2017; De Koning & Martin (Eds.), 1996). PAR emphasizes active community involvement in finding solutions to its problems. It rides on a well-documented principle that local ownership assures success and sustainability of interventions agreed upon. Furthermore, the participatory nature of PAR promotes knowledge exchange within and between communities (e.g. universities, policy-making or other research and service delivery institutions) (Banks, et. al., 2013) and, therefore, helps to develop knowledge, get commitments from all parties involved regarding the issue at hand, as well as teaching skills necessary for working together harmoniously. In essence, PAR produces empowered and harmonious communities. It was against this background that the study sought to understand causes to interparty political conflict and violence in Zambia by engaging political leaders from contesting parties at provincial, district and constituent level to find solutions to problems affecting them. Hence, PAR design was adopted for this study.

The purpose of this study was to help reduce interparty political violence prior to August 2016 general elections in Zambia. A two way approach was envisioned: first, to find out (from political leaders) why they fight in the political space (understand root causes to interparty political violence in Zambia) and with their help, find solutions to that problem, assuming local ownership of agreed upon interventions will have higher chances of success than solutions prescribed by outsiders (Banks, 2013; Kaye & Harris, 2017).

The research initially targeted political party leaders from 5 of the 10 provinces in Zambia which, due to media reports on political violence, were considered areas of concern. These provinces were: Central, Copperbelt, Lusaka, Southern and Western provinces. The research classified the Zambian political terrain into two categories. The first category was those provinces which reported high incidences of political violence, hence classified as “hot spots” (Aniekwe & Kushie, 2011). The other provinces were classified based on their relative calmness or less violence. More research participants were drawn from areas considered as hot spots, and fewer from areas of less concern (Table 1). This research took place from 18<sup>th</sup> July to 6<sup>th</sup> August 2016, ending just a week before general elections took place on 11<sup>th</sup> August 2016. Study participants were purposely selected by their respective political parties based on their positions in the party, and were drawn from three levels of party hierarchy, namely: provincial, district and constituency levels. The rationale for this selection was to build an inclusive team of participants



who would influence their political cadres and sympathisers at different levels of their communities. This process responds to Paul Lederach's comprehensive conflict transformation approach to peace-building, which involves communities (Lederach, 1995; Lederach, 1997), as well as to PAR core principles which advocate for local communities to find solutions to their problems (Banks, 2013; Harris, 2017; International Alert, 2017; Kaye, 2017; De Koning & Martin (Eds.), 1996). According to Lederach's approach, the aim is to identify representative individuals or groups in the middle-range level and empower them with mediation skills and other peace-building measures that can be used to address conflict in their localities. Middle-range managers occupy a very strategic space in the sense that they "sit" between the community and senior managers and this gives them space and opportunity to influence people's thinking below and above their position. This research rides on this principle, to empower political party officials with conflict prevention skills which would later be used in their respective communities. The PAR process served as a form of training for participants to: i) understand causes of political violence, ii) how to prevent conflict and, iii) to empower them with skills and knowledge on how to transform political actors into peace envoys in their communities.

Based on the preponderance of clientelistic violent conflicts associated with presidential elections, participants were drawn from 9 political parties contesting for a presidential position in 2016 general elections. It was assumed, based on previous experiences, that these nine political parties had higher chances of engaging in political violence to seek support for their presidential candidate than those who were only participating at parliamentary, mayoral and councillor level positions. The study followed a four-phase sequence of action research: first, planning actions / interventions to improve practice; second, acting to implement planned improvement; third, describing and monitoring effects of actions; and fourth, evaluating outcomes of actions.

Research participants also applied this cycle during practical sessions when they were asked to generate solutions to address root causes to political violence in Zambia (Figure 3).

### **Target Group**

The research targeted to reach 600 political party leaders from nine political parties who fielded presidential candidates. However, only 521 people participated in this study, yielding 86.83% success rate. Considering that this study was undertaken one month before 2016 general elections when most political players were out on their campaign trails, this participation rate is deemed to be quite high and reasonably encouraging. Also, participants' representation from all levels (provincial, district and constituent levels) was quite high.

Training sessions were interactive, participatory, practical, and focused on problem-solving. In other words, the training was results oriented. In order to prevent information overload for participants drawn from lower levels of the political party hierarchy, research participants were put into three separate groups, representing party officials at provincial, district and constituent levels. Each group had two days' interactions held in five provincial locations: Mongu (Western Province only); Livingstone (Southern Province only); Lusaka (Lusaka Province also included people from Eastern Province); Kabwe (Central Province, which included participants from Muchinga and Northern Provinces); and Kitwe, (Copperbelt Province, which also catered for participants from Luapula and North-Western Provinces). Each two-day session comprised approximately 120 participants. Working with smaller groups was found desirable because interactions in small groups tend to be more effective than larger groups and it is also easier to achieve group consensus (Olson, 1971). However, a balance had to be found to make

groups big enough to avoid effects of social pressure and social incentives, both of which are pervasive in very small groups (Olson, 1971). Nonetheless, the self-serving character of individuals can also tip the balance of group dynamics in any social setting. And this is more true in Zambian politics where focus on partisan (and individual) benefits outweighs emphasis on the public good.

Overall, 521 political party leaders from 9 political parties participated in this research, which provided practical training in conflict prevention, analysis, mediation and negotiation. Out of this number, 124 participants (33.40%) were women while 347 (66.60%) were men. It was not surprising that women’s representation was low because Zambian politics is still very much a male-dominated arena with very few women in leadership positions. For instance, currently Zambia has 18.8% women parliamentarians compared to 81.2% men (Zambian Parliament, 2016). In fact, this trend originates from party structures where women are mainly relegated to being praise singers and not given equal opportunity with their male counterparts to hold party positions. The situation is not different even at local government level where there are 132 female councillors across the country, compared to 1,323 male councillors (Ministry of Gender, 2018, p. 8). Table 1 gives a summary of participants from each province, broken down by gender.

Table 1: Number of Research Participants from each Province

PROVINCE	LEVEL			GENDER		TOTAL
	Provincia l	District	Constituency	Female	Male	
1 CENTRAL <sup>1</sup>	33	40	50	40	83	123
2 COPPERBELT <sup>1</sup>	36	38	32	37	69	106
3 LUSAKA <sup>1</sup>	40	32	40	48	64	112
4 SOUTHERN	30	30	30	26	64	90
5 WESTERN	38	52		23	67	90
			<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>521</b>

<sup>1</sup> The locations below accommodated participants from other provinces as follows:  
**Central Province:** 23 people from Muchinga (10) & Northern (13) provinces joined their colleagues in Kabwe.  
**Copperbelt Province:** 16 officials from Luapula (8) & Northwestern (8) provinces went to Kitwe.  
**Lusaka Province:** 22 people from Eastern Province participated in Lusaka.

### Conflict Theory

Conflict theory seeks to scientifically explain in general how conflict starts and varies, and the effects it brings in society. In its main argument, conflict theory concerns itself with unequal distribution of scarce resources and power, using Weber’s three systems of stratification (theory of stratification) based on class, status, and power (Weber, 1947), where power is seen as the central feature of society. According to Weber (1947), conflict does not involve the economy to the extreme, but the state and economy together set up conditions for conflict. And it is these

conditions that society either embraces or reacts to—peacefully or violently. In the case at hand, people are reacting to what they consider as unfair conditions and treatment.

This study uses a social psychological concept and middle range relative deprivation theory (RDT) to undergird the argument for a bottom-up approach to conflict prevention. The theory of relative deprivation proposes that people view their well-being as being worse when individuals perceive themselves to be worse off than their comparison or reference group, then they feel relatively deprived (Hegre, Østby and Raleigh, 2009). According to Hegre et al., (2009), people in locations that are “relatively poor and are marginalised by the central government should be more likely to support and join a rebel group that works to topple the government” (Hegre, Østby and Raleigh 2009, p. 600).

The theory of relative deprivation (Hegre, Østby and Raleigh, 2009) seems to confirm people’s feelings in this study on their perception of government’s performance regarding its application of basic democratic principles in Zambia (Table 3). Participants from the Patriotic Front (the party in government) rated government highly on all items while those from opposition parties expressed dissatisfaction in all areas. And both groups gave reasons for their assessment. This is not surprising because people aligned to the Party in government tend to access all the benefits, e.g. getting government contracts, soft treatment or being shielded (protected) when found on the wrong side of the law, etc. As a result, they do not feel government’s weight while those in opposition are constantly in check. Indeed, such treatment totally defeats democratic ethos which, among other things, demands fairness, equity, accountability, transparency and applying the rule of law. Departure from any of these parameters introduces unfair treatment and consequently becomes a source of conflict. Based on observations from this study, unfair conditions force people in opposition parties to engage in political violence to fight for their rights because the political playing field favors the party in government against other Zambians. For example, Zambia Police segregate in their application of the Public Order Act. Notices for meetings from opposition parties are in most cases not supported, and when applicants go ahead with their meeting, the same police go to disrupt those meetings. But the party in government hold their meetings even without giving a notice to the police. Another example relates to driving on the wrong side of the road. During political campaigns, it is common practice for the party in control of government to take over roads and drive even on the wrong side of the road without any arrests or reprisal. Police stand aside and let that level of hooliganism go unpunished. Yet, the same police are quick to arrest any other party if they dare do the same thing. Unfair treatment sows seeds of resentment and makes people react aggressively.

### **Study Outcomes**

Researchers spent six days in each provincial centre to interact with research participants — two days with each group representing provincial, district and constituency party officials. Using PAR principles, and tapping into conflict prevention techniques (Lederach, 1995 & 1997), research participants were put in groups which represented all parties and were assigned to do conflict analysis using a Problem Tree approach and offer solutions (Lederach, 1995 & 1997; Lund, 1996). This process entailed identifying root causes to political violence, show effects from that violence, and then offer solutions to stop political violence. As people who either plan or and execute their party’s involvement in political violence, this conflict analysis exercise provided an opportunity for their individual and group introspection.

Initially, some participants tried to use this process as a blame game in which certain political parties (e.g. PF and UPND) were identified as major culprits perpetuating political violence in Zambia. But after realizing that the process was about addressing political violence as a common “enemy” and not individual entities, the analysis later helped to build relationships in respective groups. This occurrence responds to expert observations which argue that if not well handled, conflict analysis can itself generate a conflict. Instead of focusing on the problem, people may start blaming each other and this usually generates hateful feelings and exacerbates rather than reduces conflict (Galtung, 1996; Pruitt and Kim, 2004). However, when properly executed, conflict analysis tends to bring harmony and mend broken relationships. Both of these were achieved in this process. As Mancur Olson (1971) argued, group size matters; the smaller the group size the easier it is to arrive at [consensus] decisions (p. 53-55). In this case, because groups were small, and each group had no partisan majority (e.g., having more people from one party) to tilt decisions in any party’s favour, most likely this made it easier to focus on the problem rather than on partisan interests. And because conflict analysis had no room for seeking political alliances (as in who wins), this in itself also eliminated any aspirations for collusion or forming alliances. It is common behavior in politics to form alliances to accrue economic or social benefits from some undertaking. Equally important is the aspect of social pressure in small groups (Olson 1971, p. 62), as group members can easily be enticed to align themselves to a particular way of thinking and, or decision. However, due to their composition, this approach seems to have created what Mancur Olso (1971) calls “privileged” and “intermediate” groups, which had both economic and social incentives that inspired them to “work towards achievement of the collective goods” (p. 63). In their conflict analysis, research participants addressed a common problem and, therefore, put their skills and expertise towards solving it, hence the proposed interventions in Table 2.

Overall, this PAR enhanced political party leaders’ knowledge, skills and understanding in conflict analysis, prevention, and transformation. Through this process, they were able to identify root causes of political violence in Zambia, indicate the effects, and also offer solutions to this problem using a bottom-up approach, location specific and with interventions mutually agreed upon by themselves. The participants learned how to develop knowledge and get commitments from all parties involved regarding the issue at hand, as well as skills necessary for working together harmoniously. Having participated in this process, research participants committed to apply civility in their political conduct. It was evident that this study would help reduce interparty political violence because these political players now understood root causes to political violence and offered solutions to address this problem. There was a general understanding that electoral stakeholders must take a “zero-tolerance” approach to political violence and election manipulation, both of which culminate in deceit and illegitimate office bearers and ultimately lead to illegitimate government systems, which then become a bone of contention and source of conflict. The section below reports key outcomes from this study.

### **Political Behaviour**

Understanding the logic of group actions and objectives of their political behavior was a critical element in this process. As Mancur Olson (1971) argues, actions taken by people in an organization tend to reflect its values and their allegiance to that organisation. People decide to belong to an organisation based on their belief that it will serve their individual and collective interests.

When asked why political parties in Zambia tend to employ violence during their campaigns instead of peaceful strategies, 94% of participants confessed that this strategy was designed to intimidate their opponents (and supporters) which then allows their party to advance and increase their party's chances of winning elections. Surprisingly, research participants did not even reflect on how their actions impacted on the larger community; they only had a narrow focus that their actions were designed to disrupt their political opponents' chances to win. Some people, especially unemployed youths, engaged in political violence for economic gain because political parties (and aspiring candidates) paid for that service. However, some did that out of loyalty to implement instructions from their party patrons, while others confessed total ignorance even with respect to laws that prescribe how people should conduct themselves in the political arena. It was surprising to note that about 95% of research participants did not know it was an offence under the *Electoral Code of Conduct* to remove, tear or deface another party's campaign materials (GRZ, 2011). It was astonishing to encounter such a degree of ignorance (not to mention illiteracy) on potential candidates likely to hold high positions in government, assuming their party won the elections! How would such people manage the affairs of a country whose laws they knew nothing about? In a way, this revelation also confirmed why they engage in violence; they are ignorant ponies in the political space who only wait for instructions from their party central committees on what activities to implement, and implement the same without question. A similar trend was observed on their understanding of democratic principles where it was observed that their knowledge was close to zero.

When participants were assigned a group exercise on conflict analysis to identify root causes of political violence (rather than asking them why they fight) and to offer solutions that will address the problem, they generated a long list of reasons (*Table 2*), most of which relate to poor leadership (greedy, selfish, dishonesty, corrupt, dictatorial, unaccountable leaders); weak and biased public institutions; segregation / discrimination (nepotism and tribalism); human rights abuse; poverty; corruption; illiteracy and ignorant citizenry, especially on electoral laws; and non-ideological parties.

This long list reflects not only so many potential areas of conflict that need to be addressed, but also gives a measure of how little attention government and political parties have given to this area. Strictly speaking, political parties should have taken political violence as an area of concern, but because they use it as a tool towards achieving their goal, it ceases to be a problem until they are on the receiving end of the effects from that violence, which sadly also affects the larger community. Until political parties arrive at a point where they apply zero-tolerance to political violence, it will take a long time to curb this scourge. However, this PAR process gives hope to getting closer to that point. One way would be to intensify mass education within and outside party hierarchy on the evils of political violence. More importantly, anyone perpetuating political violence must be punished to the full extent of the law; no sacred cows.

Table 2: Causes, Effects and Solutions to Political Violence from a PAR group exercise, Zambia.

	ROOT CAUSES OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE	EFFECTS <sup>5</sup>	POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS
1	<b>Poor leadership</b> - Greedy, selfish, dishonesty, corrupt, dictatorial leaders - Non-transparent & unaccountable leaders - Abuse of power - Non-patriotic leaders - Vengeful (rather than reconciliatory) leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Anger, mob psychology, violent behaviour</li> <li>➤ Intra- &amp; interparty fighting</li> <li>➤ Riots due to unfair treatment under the law</li> <li>➤ Injury, loss of life</li> <li>➤ Destruction of property</li> <li>➤ Displacement of people, forced migration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Ethical, honest, transparent, accountable, &amp; patriotic leaders who are public-service driven</li> <li>➤ Good governance</li> <li>➤ An independent Judiciary</li> <li>➤ An independent Electoral Commission</li> <li>➤ Security sector reforms</li> <li>➤ Respect for human rights</li> <li>➤ Tolerance of divergent views</li> <li>➤ Apply rule of law at all times</li> <li>➤ Equal distribution of resources and power</li> <li>➤ Dialogue, not fights</li> <li>➤ Embrace <i>One Zambia One Nation</i> Motto in its true meaning</li> <li>➤ Party Constitutions to spell out Party Ideology (not copy &amp; paste)</li> <li>➤ Positive political statements from leaders</li> <li>➤ Stop transporting political cadres to other provinces where they do not reside.</li> </ul>
2	<b>Weak &amp; biased public institutions</b> - Biased Electoral Commission of Zambia - Mismanagement of the electoral process - Late announcement of election results - Selective application of the law - Police brutality and bias - Absence of / biased coverage from public media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Loss of credibility in public institutions, e.g. Judiciary, Electoral Commission and electoral process</li> <li>➤ Illegitimate election results</li> <li>➤ Tribalism, racial discrimination &amp; divisions in society</li> <li>➤ Promotes hateful feelings</li> <li>➤ Vulgar, hateful language</li> <li>➤ Broken homes &amp; societies, traumatized communities</li> </ul>	
3	<b>Nepotism &amp; tribalism</b> - Hate speeches - Patronage & politics of the belly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Weak economy, lack of development</li> <li>➤ Economic imbalances across regions</li> </ul>	
4	<b>Compromised judiciary</b> - Selective application of the law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Unjustified, selective arrests/ law enforcement</li> </ul>	
5	<b>Human rights abuse</b> , e.g., police brutality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Claims on territorial control</li> </ul>	
6	<b>Illiteracy/ignorant citizenry</b> , especially on electoral laws		
7	<b>Corruption</b> - Use illegal (financial) resources		
8	<b>Poverty</b>		
9	<b>Absence of party ideologies</b> - Lacks basis of party existence		

As noted above, 94% of political party cadres engaged in violence out of ignorance; they had no clue what democracy means, and worse still what national electoral laws stipulate. Therefore, one area that needs immediate attention is stakeholder education in democracy and human rights, as well as electoral laws and conduct.

Opposition political parties complained that in most cases, violence is initiated by the party in government who had both government machinery and other resources to traverse the country at will. And sadly, no one has been punished for engaging in violence in all places where political violence occurred simply because the major culprit was the PF. This selective application of the law is not sitting well with other parties, including the affected communities who lost property and life in such encounters. One wonders how these communities might react one day to what is perceived as government insensitivity in putting a stop to political violence. Hopefully, the Commission of Inquiry into Voting Patterns and Electoral Violence,<sup>6</sup> whose report the country awaits, will offer lasting solutions to this problem.

Regarding political leaders' understanding of democratic principles, all participants portrayed partisan inclination in their analysis of national issues. Patriotic Front (PF) Party officials supported government in everything it was doing, whereas participants from opposition parties only had words of condemnation for government actions in all areas (Table 3).

*Table 3: Democracy Check in Zambia*

DEMOCRACY FUNCTIONALITY	PERCEPTION SCORE (%)	
	<i>Party in Govt (Patriotic Front)</i>	<i>Opposition Parties<sup>7</sup></i>
<b>1</b> Our democracy gives people freedoms	100%	40%
<b>2</b> People are FREE to express themselves	95%	30%
<b>3</b> We allow and accept divergent views	95%	0%
<b>4</b> Relies on majority rule	100%	0%
<b>5</b> Leaders are accountable to the electorate	90%	10%
<b>6</b> Our democracy applies the rule of law	100%	5%

PF officials defended their party as doing a great job in upholding democratic principles in Zambia while participants from the opposition political parties catalogued the PF government's failures as systematically killing democracy, which agrees with observations noted about the Zambian democracy by Baylies and Szeftel (1992) and Goldring and Wahman (2016).

Considering the relationship between members and their organisation, it was not surprising to see their allegiance expressed in their analysis of various issues. Despite the fact that all were personal assessments and secret, yet results showed that people were influenced internally by their party affiliations, which exerted internal social pressure and forced them to apply group think rather than individual rational thinking. This is not surprising because in the political space, political supporters' thought process is captured by their party loyalty. They are more interested in achieving their party interests rather than national interests. Suffice to say, major positive outcomes from this participatory action research include the following:

## Reduced Political Violence

Feedback from research participants, as well as journalists who covered the process in various locations, indicated that there was a reduction in political violence immediately after this engagement. Political leaders who participated in this action research communicated to their party cadres not to engage in violence. A good example of such a positive impact was a peaceful campaign rally held by the United Party for National Development (UPND) in Kanyama compound, Lusaka on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2016. This was the first political rally held after Electoral Commission of Zambia (ECZ) lifted a campaign ban in Lusaka city, which was instituted to curb political violence in the capital city. This rally would have been a bloody encounter because alleged PF cadres had planned to disrupt it. Since PF officials were part of the participants at the time, the PF team was politely requested by other party officials to intervene and show good leadership. Hence, instructions were issued to PF supporters not to engage in political violence. That day, the UPND political rally was peaceful, confirming that this interaction helped party officials at different levels to reflect and reconsider their role: to promote peace, not political violence.

*Figure 3: Conflict Analysis on Causes of Political Violence*



Group work enhanced interparty interactions. In this photo, people presenting their group analysis came from PF (left), UPND (the lady in the middle) and UNIP (right); all of them in their respective party regalia.

In the post-training period, there was a general reduction in political violence and interparty conflicts across the country. For instance, Mongu in Western Province, which recorded deadly violent incidences in 2011 and 2015, and Mufumbwe in North-western Province, which also experienced terrible interparty violence in 2011 elections, were both relatively peaceful during 2016 general elections.

An evaluation of the PAR process by party officials at the end revealed that everyone greatly appreciated participating in this study; they confirmed having been empowered in knowledge and skills for conflict prevention. They pointed out that most of them had limited knowledge on electoral laws, human rights, and basic requirements for good governance and democracy and how all of these applied to them. After watching documentaries about Rwanda (1994 genocide) and Kenya (2007 political violence), they noted both with dismay and appreciation how easily a country can go up in flames because of political intolerance; they



could see themselves in that situation. Consequently, they pledged to uphold peace in their political campaigns.

Although no follow-up research has been done after the 2016 elections to ascertain after-effects of this PAR, a few calls received from some participants who expressed their appreciation for the positive impact the PAR created in their respective political parties seems to suggest that a good seed was planted from that process. Since behavior change tends to take a long time, one only hopes that those few party officials who participated will take responsibility to influence their colleagues to embrace civility in their political interactions.

### **Enhanced Knowledge and Skills**

Participants confirmed that their knowledge on conflict resolution and peacebuilding was greatly enhanced through this action research. In particular, they appreciated the interactive and hands-on approach which this research provided (Figure 3). Some participants confessed having engaged in or perpetuated political conflict and violence out of ignorance. After this interaction, they acknowledged having understood their roles and responsibilities and more importantly their obligations as stipulated under the law (GRZ, 2016). A good number of trainees did not know it was an offence under the Electoral Code of Conduct to tear apart other people's campaign materials (GRZ, 2011).

### **Mutual Respect for Coexistence**

Participants acknowledged having understood the need for peaceful coexistence in a political space, which entailed, among other things, acceptance of divergent views and choices, respect for human rights (GRZ, 2011, Regulation 5 and 21), tolerance (Figure 5), and adhering to the electoral code of conduct. Put simply, this meant upholding the rule of law in all their activities. Furthermore, it was noted that because party regalia in Zambia is not sold but given free, it does not necessarily indicate in any way that an individual who wears a party's regalia supports that particular party.

On the contrary, people get party regalia to be used as work suits when doing manual work, as it saves them money. As one participant put it, "many voters in this election cycle are watermelons," meaning they are green outside pretending to support the PF (whose party color is green) and yet they are truly red inside; their real allegiance is with the UPND (whose party color is red), and that's the party they will vote for. Hence, it was noted that they should be free to wear any party regalia of their choice, even a combination of party regalia (

**Figure 4).** Beating up or intimidating people who wore another party's regalia will not change people's decisions. Their choices remained secure and will be expressed on polling day.

### **Respect for Human Rights, and People's Choices**

This research also provided an opportunity for people from different political parties to interact freely without intimidation from anyone. On the first day most participants exhibited hostile attitudes towards people from so called "rival" parties. After first-day interactions, antagonistic behaviour was eliminated and participants interacted freely with each other.

Figure 4: Free to wear any party regalia of my choice.



Clad in various party regalia, a research participant demonstrates the degree of freedom Zambians should enjoy in expressing their political choices and affiliations as articulated in Part III of the national constitution which provides for the Bill of Rights.

In fact, on the second day of training, participants even wore their party regalia to emphasize that everyone was free and entitled to enjoy their fundamental human rights and freedoms, as enshrined in the national constitution, which includes, among other things: freedom of movement, speech, expression, assembly and association, etc. (GRZ 1996, Part III).<sup>8</sup> Every person is entitled to protection under the law regardless of race, place of origin, political opinions, color, creed, sex or marital status (GRZ 1996, Part II).<sup>9</sup> During the run-up to 2015 and 2016 elections, people's freedom of expression and association were completely curtailed. It was common to see PF cadres harass or beat anyone who wore opposition party regalia and sadly, the government seems to endorse this development as no one was punished for engaging in such behavior. In return, when an opportunity arose, opposition party cadres who were deprived of their basic human rights would reciprocate in a similar manner, thus creating a cycle of violence.

### **Developed Intra-party Relations**

This PAR helped participants to create new friendships and expanded their networks; they were able to call each other and stop violent activities planned by their cadres. In Lusaka and Kabwe, participants agreed to hold road shows where all political parties would participate to demonstrate that they were not enemies, but leaders looking for a vote to serve the Zambian people. This was meant to emphasize the fact that people can hold divergent views but still remain friends because each person was entitled to his/her opinions (Figure 5).

### **Civic Education to Society**

The training program received wide coverage on public and private television and radio stations, as well as print and electronic media. This media support helped disseminate

information on conflict prevention to a wider community far beyond towns where this training was conducted. It is also evident that this training program helped build a good image for ECZ, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Dag Hammarskjöld Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies. This partnership with the media should be strengthened to help build a culture of peace in the political arena. News items on this training can be accessed from respective media outlets.

Figure 5: *Respect my Choice, it's my right*



***One Zambia One Nation*** is a national Motto which promotes national unity irrespective of political party affiliations, tribal alliances or any other identity tags. However, in the recent past, Zambian politicians have tended to declare certain parts of the country as belonging to their party and “no go” areas for other parties.

This photo, captured in one of the locations during 2016 general elections, depicts a PF supporter (left) and UPND supporter (right) walking hand in hand as colleagues.

This is what all Zambians are yearning for – a *One Zambia One Nation* – a place where people fully enjoy their human rights, including freedom of assembly and association...

## Discussion

Zambia has been a beacon of peace in the southern African region long before attaining its political independence in 1964. For instance, the country played a pivotal role as a member of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland (1953-1963), serving as a key mining center; and Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) attracted workers from both Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and Nyasaland (Malawi), which became useful in creating harmonious relationships between the people of these three nations.

Later after independence Zambia again demonstrated its peaceful character through its resolve to support peaceful political liberation efforts in the region. Zambian leaders strongly believed in self-governance and committed to support political independence liberation efforts in the southern African region, which culminated in all countries getting their political independence, with South Africa being the last kid on the block in 1994. Zambia housed many freedom fighters from the region, and borrowing from Mahatma Ghandi’s philosophy of non-violence, placed emphasis on peaceful approaches in fighting for their political independence. Freedom fighters from Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe all had bases in Zambia, and now consider Zambia their first home before their countries became independent.

After attaining its independence, Zambia also played a critical role in the formation of regional bodies aimed at promoting peaceful interactions and coexistence of the people in the region. Some of these bodies include: Southern African Development Coordinating Conference

(SADCC) in 1980, later transformed into Southern African Development Community (SADC) in 1992; Preferential Trade Area for Eastern and Southern Africa in 1981, later transformed into the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) in 1994—whose headquarters is currently located in Lusaka, Zambia.

In the global arena, Zambia decided to be non-aligned to any geopolitical grouping and remains a non-aligned nation to date. In a way, this has helped Zambia not to be entangled in geopolitical issues that do not directly serve Zambia's interests, and subsequently places the country in a neutral position where it is able to serve as a mediator between nations and, or groups in conflict.

Against this background of being a non-violent nation, an oasis of peace in the region, it is disturbing to see Zambian politicians embrace violence in their operations. It is feared that such behavior will erode Zambia's peaceful character and possibly plunge the country into chaos, or worse still, push it into being a failed state as evidence shows from what has happened in other parts of Africa. Hence it became imperative to investigate what really was driving this political violence in Zambia, and this PAR process documented a long list from political party officials on what they thought were drivers of political violence. In a nutshell, two things came out: 1. the party in power (Patriotic Front) wants to remain in power by all means necessary (mainly using intimidation, violence, information blackout, manipulation, and abuse of power); and 2. Opposition Parties were frustrated at the level of illegality perpetuated by the PF. Participants attributed most causes of political violence as being practised by the PF and the opposition is left with no other option but to reciprocate in a similar manner of applying force. From their frustration, it was easy to notice that people were simply reacting to a situation in which they felt deprived of many things, mainly bordering on their lack of civil and political freedoms, and access to numerous resources and opportunities.

This research agrees with arguments advanced by deprivation theorists as well as political science experts on organizational behaviour and group dynamics who argue, among other things, that: i) disadvantaged groups are more likely to support insurgence and political violence to fight against their relative deprivation (Hegre et al., 2009); ii) people belong to organisations to accrue benefits from their membership; and iii) group dynamics push people to behave in a particular way, sometimes against their individual objective thinking (Olson, 1971). It was evident from this research that in its current state, Zambia's political and electoral playing field is tilted in favor of the PF (the party currently in power), thus depriving other political players of a level playing field. This situation creates frustration, which leads to aggressive behavior, expressed through political violence, which is a form of aggression. Goldring and Wahman (2016) also noted similar observations (Ndulo, n.d.). In this context, frustration-aggression theory can also be used to explain violent behavior. In terms of identifying catalysts of conflict, Berkowitz (1989) explains that frustration-aggression theory ranks high on research on aggression. It has been used to explain both human and animal behavior. The theory gives a macro approach to conflict and argues that aggression comes as a result of blocking or frustrating a person's effort to attain a goal.

Furthermore, according to Hartogs and Artzt (1970), organized violence is patterned and deliberate, and is therefore instrumental. It is a form of social combat usually exercised in the context of group interests and goals. That is why electoral processes in Africa's "new" or third wave democracies have, with few exceptions, been characterized by violence. In Zambia, it can be argued that rising electoral violence reflects deepening contestation for political power, weak governance institutions, violent political parties and a largely ineffective electoral management

structure (UNECA, 2013). Other factors include: absence of the rule of law and justice, denial of human rights, lack of political representation for minority groups, ideological positions, unemployment, poverty and rise in food prices, lack of accountability, poor governance and weak judicial systems (World Bank, 2011). All these factors often lead to tension and eventually aggressive behaviour.

Elections, being formal processes of selecting people for public office, play an important role in propagating tenets of democracy and are key elements of democratic processes. Elections provide means by which political competition in society is channelled into a constructive process with common rules to choose people's representatives. Robust democratic institutions are usually understood as the ultimate guarantor for social peace. However, since electoral processes are intrinsically about the attainment of political power, which are often high-stake contexts, elections, as a process of competition for political power, quite often also become catalysts of conflict. And if not well managed, this may lead to violent encounters between political competitors, as has been the case in many African countries.<sup>10</sup> Violence rides on thoughts because thoughts are actions; they start as passive reflections, become assertive and finally manifest in aggressive behaviour. This study tried to arrest the situation by engaging political players who carry this responsibility to embrace positive thinking and work for a better tomorrow. War is a creation of man, and people have a choice to embrace peace.

## **Conclusion**

This paper conveys results of a participatory action research (PAR) as an important tool for understanding causes of political violence in Zambia and finding solutions to prevent the same. Although there was scepticism that having political party leaders from nine different parties in one place at the peak of their 2016 general election campaigns might degenerate into a blame game that could spur antagonistic behavior and possibly interparty fights, on the contrary, bringing these political players in one room provided them a peaceful space and an opportunity to freely share their views on why they behave the way they do. Not only did these interactions help them appreciate the need to uphold each other's human rights, but more importantly, this interaction served as an opportunity for self-introspection; accepting wrong-doing and committing to become good leaders. Since political office has no permanent tenure, but operates on a revolving door, this process reminded participants that they will reap rewards from their actions long after leaving their positions. By engaging in political violence now political leaders are essentially socializing the current young generation into becoming hooligans with no respect for the rule of law, and when their chance comes to become leaders, these young people will practice the same violence based on how they were socialized. At that point, current leaders will become victims of bad behavior being inculcated now. For this reason, current political leaders have a rare privilege to promulgate and enforce standards that promote and uphold civility and human dignity in all human interactions. It is easier to destroy something than to build it; political violence was a good recipe for destroying Zambia's peace and community tranquillity. Hence, leaders should always aim at building peaceful communities who uphold and respect human rights and will enforce the rule of law in Zambia at all times.

Findings from this research agrees with arguments advanced by deprivation theorists as well as political science experts on organizational behaviour and group dynamics who argue, among other things, that: i) disadvantaged groups are more likely to support insurgence and political violence to fight against their relative deprivation (Hegre et al., 2009); ii) people belong

to organisations to accrue benefits from their membership; and iii) group dynamics push people to behave in a particular way, sometimes against their individual objective thinking (Olson, 1971). It was evident that in its current state, Zambia's political and electoral playing field favours the PF (the party controlling government), thus depriving other political players of a level playing field. This situation creates frustration, which leads to aggressive behavior, expressed through political violence. As witnessed in various locations in Zambia political violence has deep cost implications in terms of damage to property and even loss of life, not to mention damaged relationships (Brown and Rosecrance, 1999) all of which become triggers of conflict. Hence, an initiative which brings local people together to find solutions to their problems, as this PAR process did, should be promoted.

This study confirms the utility of PAR in conflict prevention and resolution, which advocates for a bottom-up approach as an alternative to other dominant modes of intervention such as cohesive military forms of intervention. PAR and other bottom-up methods allow local people at the grassroots to own and champion peaceful coexistence with their political opponents. Given the ever-rising number of violent political conflicts reported, stakeholders should consider incorporating PAR methods in their interventions to transform communities and political players into agents of peace and peacebuilding.

In terms of new findings, the research shows that: i) majority of political cadres in Zambia engage in violence because of their absolute ignorance on democratic principles and electoral laws and conduct; ii) weak and biased public institutions which selectively punish wrongdoing, mostly favoring the ruling party; iii) it is possible to positively alter (rewire) political cadres' mindset through behavior change; iv) absence of party ideologies produces a cadre with no ethos and values to stand by, hence their constant defection across party lines; v) abuse of vulnerable youths by political elite who pay these youths to engage in politics of intimidation; and vi) it is possible to bring together in one room warring political competitors to discuss national issues even at the height of political tension. Of course, poverty, poor political leadership and endemic corruption contributes to all these problems.

Two major contributions that come out of this research are that a bottom-up approach is more sustainable in conflict prevention and its resolution, and that PAR can effectively be utilized to promote positive behavior change among political players which may lead to the desired peaceful societal interactions. As highlighted by UNESCO, "since wars begin in the minds of men and women, it is in the minds of men and women that the defences of peace must be constructed" (UNESCO, 1945—preamble to UNESCO's Constitution). This study aimed at contributing to achieving this global desire for peaceful societies.

## Notes

---

<sup>1</sup> **Acknowledgements** Researchers acknowledge, with thanks, Dag Hammarskjöld Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies for giving them time off from their teaching duties to conduct this study, the Copperbelt University (CBU) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for co-financing the study, and the Electoral Commission of Zambia who believed in their expertise and capability to engage politicians and help bring peaceful interactions to the political space. A special thank you goes to all resource persons who delivered their input with such passion for peace; and to Dr. John Bwalya, Director at Dag Hammarskjöld Institute, who not only believed in the importance of this process, but also cheered us on to share our findings with a wider audience. Last, but not least, the active participation of party officials (who also shared their experiences frankly), is greatly appreciated. Without their input, there would have been very little or possibly nothing to share. Thank you all.

---

<sup>2</sup> These presidents served their terms as follows: 1. David Kenneth Kaunda (24 Oct. 1964 –2 Nov.1991); 2. Frederick Titus Chiluba (2 Nov. 1991–2 Jan 2002); 3. Levy Mwanawasa (2 Jan. 2002–19 Aug. 2008, died while serving his second term); 4. Rupiah Bwezani Banda (2 Nov. 2008–23 Sept. 2011); 5. Michael Chilufya Sata (23 Sept. 2011–28 Oct 2014, died while serving his first term in office); and 6. Edgar Chagwa Lungu (25 Jan. 2015-??; then 13 Sept. 2016 to date).

<sup>3</sup> This refers to people injured as well as damage to private and public property.

<sup>4</sup> East & north covered Eastern, Northern, Muchinga and Luapula Provinces, while south and west covered Southern, Western Northwestern and Central Provinces. Copperbelt and Lusaka Provinces, with a large metropolitan population, were a toss-up; parties shared votes from these locations.

<sup>5</sup> These effects and possible solutions may apply to multiple causes of political violence.

<sup>6</sup> President Edgar Lungu appointed this 15-member Commission in October 2016 to examine causes of political violence before and after 11<sup>th</sup> August 2016 general elections.

<sup>7</sup> These parties were: United Party for National Development (UPND), United National Independence Party (UNIP), Movement for Multi-party Democracy (MMD), Forum for Democracy & Development (FDD), Green Party, People's Alliance for Change (PAC), Rainbow Party, and Democratic Alliance (DA).

<sup>8</sup> Part III of the *Constitution of the Republic of Zambia* (GRZ, 1996) provides for Protection of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms of the Individual.

<sup>9</sup> Section 11 of the *Zambian Constitution, 1996*, prohibits discrimination.

<sup>10</sup> For example, in Kenya, Cote d'Ivoire, Uganda, Zimbabwe, etc.

## References

- Banks, S., et al. (2013). Everyday Ethics in Community-based Participatory Research. *Contemporary Social Science: Journal of the Academy of Social Sciences*, 8(3), 263-277.
- Baylies, C., & Szeftel, M. (1992). The Fall and Rise of Multi-Party Politics in Zambia. *Review of African Political Economy*, 54, 75-91.
- Ackermann, A. (2003). The Idea and Practice of Conflict Prevention. *Journal of Peace Research*, 40(3), 339-347.
- Aniekwe, C. C., & Kushie, J. (2011). *Electoral Violence Situational Analysis: Identifying Hot-Spots in the 2011 General Elections in Nigeria*. National Association for Peaceful Elections in Nigeria (NAPEN). <http://www.ifes.org/Content/Projects/Applied-Research-Center/Cross-Cutting/Election-Violence-Education-andResolution.aspx>.
- Boutros-Ghali, B. (1996). Challenges of Preventive Diplomacy: The role of the United Nations and its Secretary-General. In Cahill, M. Kevin (Ed.), *Preventive Diplomacy: Stopping Wars Before They Start* New York: Basic Books and the Center for International Health and Cooperation.
- Brown, M., & Rosecrance, R.N. (1999). *The Costs of Conflict: Prevention and Cure in the Global Arena*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield. Retrieved February 2019 from: [https://www.carnegie.org/media/filer\\_public/f7/53/f7538f98-5a6a-40fa-8854-ca12c1c1f3bb/ccny\\_book\\_1999\\_costs.pdf](https://www.carnegie.org/media/filer_public/f7/53/f7538f98-5a6a-40fa-8854-ca12c1c1f3bb/ccny_book_1999_costs.pdf)
- Carothers, T. (2002). The End of the Transition Paradigm. *Journal of Democracy*, 13(1), 5-21.
- Catt, H.; Ellis, A.; Marley, M.; Wall, A.; & Wolf, P. (2014). *Electoral Management Design*. International IDEA.
- Collier, R. B. (1999). *Paths Toward Democracy: The Working Class and Elites in Western Europe and South America*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Commonwealth Observer Group. (2011). *Zambia General Elections, 20 September 2011*. Report of the Commonwealth Observer Group, Commonwealth Secretariat.
- Curle, A. (1994). New Challenges for Citizen Peacemaking. *Medicine, Conflict and Survival*, 10(2), 96-105.
- De Koning, K., & Martin, M. (Eds.). (1996). *Participatory Research in Health*. Johannesburg: National Progressive Primary Healthcare Network.
- Electoral Commission of Zambia. (2015). *Zambia 2015 Presidential Election Results*.
- Electoral Commission of Zambia. (2006). *Conflict Management Training: Participant's Manual*. Lusaka: Electoral Commission of Zambia.
- Foundation for Democratic Process. (April 15, 2010). Violence Erupts in Mufumbwe by-election Campaigns. *Lusakatimes.com*. Retrieved from <https://www.lusakatimes.com/2010/04/15/violence-erupts-mufumbwe-byelections-campaign-fodep/>.
- Galtung, J. (1969). Violence, Peace and Peace Research. *Journal of Peace Research*, 6(3), 167-191.
- Galtung, Johan. (1996). *Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization*. London: Sage Publications.
- Goldring, E., & Michael W. (2016). Democracy in Reverse: The 2016 General Election in Zambia. *Africa Spectrum*, 51(3), 107-121.
- GRZ. (2016). *The Electoral Process Act, No. 35 of 2016*. Lusaka: Government Printers.



- GRZ. (2016). *The Electoral Commission of Zambia Act, No. 25 of 2016*. Lusaka: Government Printers.
- GRZ. (2016). *The Constitution of Zambia (Amendment), Act No. 2 of 2016*. Lusaka: Government Printers.
- GRZ. (2011). *The Electoral (Code of Conduct) Regulations*. Lusaka: Government Printers.
- GRZ. (2006). *The Electoral Act, No. 12 of 2006*. Lusaka: Government Printers.
- Habasonda, M. L. (2018). *Corruption, Ethnicity and Violence as a Triple Political Strategy: The Changing Face of Politics in Zambia*. Notes de l'Ifri, IFRI, September 2018.
- Harris, G. (2017). Building Peace via Action Research: Challenges and Potential. In Kaye, Sylvia, & Harris, Geoff (eds.), *Building Peace via Action Research*. UPEACE Africa Programme: Addis Ababa.
- Hegre, H.; Østby, G. & Raleigh, C. (2009). Poverty and Civil War Events: A Disintegrated Study of Liberia. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 53(4), 298-623.
- Huntington, P. S. (1991). Democracy's Third Wave. *Journal of Democracy*, 2(2), 12-34.
- Ifeanyi, P.(2006). *Conflict Resolution*. A paper presented at the Institute of Medical Research and Training. College of Medicine, Biode building, University College Hospital (UCH), Ibadan.
- International Alert. (2015). *Participatory Action Research: A Method to Repair Fractured Social Relations: Lessons from a Project in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*. Retrieved from [https://www.international-alert.org/sites/default/files/DRC\\_MethodRepairSocialRelations\\_EN\\_2015.pdf](https://www.international-alert.org/sites/default/files/DRC_MethodRepairSocialRelations_EN_2015.pdf).
- Kaye, S. (2017). An overview of Action Research and its Relevance to Peacebuilding. In Kaye, Sylvia, & Harris, Geoff (Eds.), *Building Peace via Action Research*. Addis Ababa: UPEACE Africa Programme, pp. 3-27.
- Kemmis, S., & McTaggart, R. (2000). Participatory Action Research. In Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2nd edition, pp. 567-605). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Lederach, J. P. (1995). *Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation Across Cultures*. Syracuse University Press. Retrieved from <http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/transform/jplall.htm>.
- Lederach, J. P. (1997). *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace Press.
- Levitsky, S., & Way, A. L. (2010). *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK.
- Lund, M. S. (1996). *Preventing Violent Conflict*. US Institute of Peace, Washington, DC.
- Migdal, J., Kohli, A., and Shue, V. (1994). *State Power and Social Forces: Domination and Transformation in the Third World*. Cambridge University Press.
- Ministry of Gender, (2018). *Gender Statistics on Women's Representation in Local Government: The Case of Zambia*.
- Mohamoud, A. A. (2006). *State Collapse and Post-Conflict Development in Africa: The Case Study of Somalia*. USA: Purdue University Press.
- Munuera, G. (1994). "Preventing Armed Conflict in Europe: Lessons learned from recent experience, Chaillot Paper 15/16.
- Ndulo, M. (n.d.). *Political Violence in Zambia and State Responsibility*. Retrieved February 2019 from: [http://www.saipar.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Ndulo\\_Political-Violence-in-Zambia-and-State-Responsibility.pdf](http://www.saipar.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Ndulo_Political-Violence-in-Zambia-and-State-Responsibility.pdf) [February 2019]

- Olson, M. (1965). *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*. Harvard University Press.
- Paffenholz, T., & Spurk, C. (2006). *Civil Society, Civic Engagement, and Peacebuilding: Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction*. World Bank, Paper No. 36: Social Development Department, Washington, DC.
- Paffenholz, T. (2003). *The Development of the Life and Peace Institute's Approach to Peacebuilding and Lessons Learned from the Somalia Experience (1990-2000)*. Kenya: Kijabe Printing Press.
- Pruitt, G., and Kim, H. (2004). *Social Conflict: Escalation, Stalemate and Settlement*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, New York: McGraw Hill.
- Rakner, L., & van de Walle, N. (2009). "Democratization by Elections: Opposition weakness in Africa." *Journal of Democracy*, 20(3), 108-121.
- Rackner, L., & Svåsand, L. (2005). "Stuck in Transition: Electoral Process in Zambia 1991-2001." *Democratization*, 12(1), 85-105.
- Ramsbotham, O., Woodhouse, T., and Miall, H. (2005). *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Reagan, J. B. (1992). Coalition Politics: Turning the Century. In Anderson, Margaret (Ed.), *Race, Class and Gender: An Anthology*. Wadsworth Inc.
- SAGE. (2008). *The SAGE Handbook of Conflict Resolution*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Smith, J. M. (1991). *Pressure, Power and Policy: State Autonomy and Policy Networks in Britain and the United States*. University of Pittsburgh Press, USA.
- Tripp, David. (n.d.). Action Research: A Methodological Introduction. Retrieved February 2019 from :  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/237316452\\_Action\\_research\\_a\\_methodological\\_introduction](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/237316452_Action_research_a_methodological_introduction)
- UNECA. (2013). *Africa Governance Report 111: Elections and the Management of Diversity*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- UNESCO. (2018). *Basic Texts*. UNESCO, 2018 Edition. [includes 1945 Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation].
- U.S. Department of State (2016). *Zambia 2016 Human Rights Report*. Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor.
- US Department of State (2015). *Zambia 2015 Human Rights Report*. Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour
- Wallensteen, P. (2002). *Understanding Conflict Resolution: War, Peace and the Global System*. SAGE Publications.
- Wallerstein, N., & Duran, B. (2003). The Conceptual, Historical and Practical Roots of Community-Based Participatory Research and Related Participatory Traditions. In Minkler, M., & Wallerstein, N. (Eds.), *Community-Based Participatory Research for Health*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.
- Weber, Max. (1947). *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Whyte, W.F. (1989). Advancing Scientific Knowledge Through Participatory Action Research. *Social Forum*, 4, 367. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01115015>.

Zartman, I. William (2006). Cowardly Lions: Missed Opportunities to Prevent Deadly Conflict and State Collapse. *International Studies Review*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (Sep., 2006), pp. 498-500.