

Villagers in Buhera still vividly recount the 2008 political horror

Heal Zimbabwe and local rural communities in five districts most affected by the post 29 March 2008 political violence carried a public memorialisation project in 2010. The memorialisation project has provided families of the bereaved and their communities with the opportunity to openly grieve the death of their beloved ones who were killed during the period of political violence. Furthermore, the project has targeted the restoration of livelihoods of families of people who were killed during this period of violence. In January 2011, the project targeted Buhera district in Manicaland province where 17 people were killed. In 2010 the project was implemented in Muzarabani, Gokwe, Headlands, Rusape, Mutoko, Zaka and Mwenezi.

Background to political violence in Buhera

Buhera district witnessed the first known and recorded murders of Zimbabwe's post 2000 political violence. The petrol bombing of Talent Mabika and Tichaona Chiminya in April 2000 as a result of political contestation between the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU PF) formed in 1963 and an emergent opposition political party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) formed 1999. Since 2000, the political duel has claimed lives, displaced people internally and destroyed property worth millions of dollars. According to a Zimbabwe Peace Project report (*Views report of May 2008*), in 2008, Buhera South was the most affected by political violence in Buhera during the period leading to the Presidential election runoff. The violence in Buhera has mainly been attributed to some elements of war veterans of the country's war of liberation and deployed army officers. The participation of such elements has compromised the victims' efforts to seek legal recourse and civic society organization's peace building initiatives.

The long arm of the law is yet to catch up with the perpetrators of political violence. There is only one case of Reuben Muteve where the people who murdered him were arrested but all the other cases are lying idle in the hands of the police. This has further exacerbated violence in Buhera as the perpetrators have gone unpunished for a long time

About 350 people had their property tampered with during the violence period, more than 500 people were assaulted and received various types of injuries. 145 children dropped out of school as a result of the deaths of their breadwinners in 2008. The calamity created by the violence led to the intervention of Heal Zimbabwe which carried various intervention strategies in the area from 10 January 2008 to date. Some of the activities included, 13 memorial services, kick starting capacity building projects for twenty families. The organization also facilitated the start of community peace building initiatives in the form of weeding ceremonies "nhimbesh" that were led by traditional leaders and this program brought together villagers from different political persuasions. This is an effort to try and address issues of polarization in local communities.

Nature of political violence in Buhera district – 2008

Targeted age group of victims of political violence	51 years and above	40-50 years	29-39 years	18-28 years
Gender	Male	Male and female	Male	Male and female
Period	2008	2002 and 2008	2008	Mostly 2008
Perpetrators	Zanu.PF Youth, policemen, soldiers	Youth from Border Gezi and Zanu- pf,	Youth from Border Gezi and Zanu- pf,	Policemen, youths from Boarder Gezi,

		policemen and soldiers	policemen and soldiers, Chiefs, War Veterans, C.I.O	youths from surrounding areas, chiefs, war veterans, Zanu-Pf youths
Extent of damage	Looting of property especially livestock and forced to leave residential area, beatings, rape of family members	Beatings leading to being disabled and miscarriage, burning of houses, killings, looting of property especially live stock, rape, being chunked out of work, jailed	Beatings leading to being disabled and miscarriage, burning of houses, killings, looting of property especially live stock and crops, rape, being chunked out of work, jailed,	Loss of parents, looting of property especially livestock and crops, beatings,
Number of victims who hold party positions	11 out of 14 (78%)	11 out of 16 (68%)	9 out of 11 (81%)	2 out of 5 (40%)
Are they registered voters?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Was the violence politically motivated	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
On average the number of people who attacked the victims	10 < (and more)	10 < (and more)	10 < (and more)	10 < (and more)
Cases reported to the police	10 out of 14 (71%)	11 out of 16 (68)	9 out of 11 (81%)	3 out of 5 (60%)
Where the perpetrators arrested?	No	No	No	No
How many victims are willing to participate in future elections?	14 (100%)	16 (100%)	11(100%)	5 (100%)