

Contents

- 3. Editor's Note
- 5. The Hidden
 Struggles of Perinatal
 Depression in
 Zimbabwe
- 8. Cultivating a Culture of Peace in Zimbabwe: The Role of Traditional Leaders
- 10. Empowering Young Women as Peace-builders: Bridging the Gap in Conflict Resolution
- 11. Peace is more than the absence of conflict
- 13. How Lack of Peace Affects My Community
- 15.The Impact of the Economy on Peace in Zimbabwe14. Political Stability and Governance

- 16. The Struggles
 Women and Girls Face
 During Menstruation in
 Zimbabwe
- 19. Gukurahundi's Impact on Peace in Zimbabwe
- 20. Building Peace: A Pathway to Lasting Harmony
- 22. Effective
 Communication as a means of conflict resolution
- 24. Effective
 Communication as a means of conflict resolution
- 25. I Have A Voice. My Voice Matters, Too, As A Young Woman





Editor's Note

As we present this edition of Her Voice, we are reminded of the profound challenges women face in Zimbabwe and across the globe. In Zimbabwe, women face myriad challenges, from the cultural stigma surrounding mental health to the economic barriers that limit access to basic sanitary products. The articles in this issue illuminate the struggles women endure, particularly regarding perinatal depression, menstruation, and their roles as peacebuilders in conflict zones.

Yet, despite these hardships, Zimbabwean women continue to exhibit remarkable resilience. Whether by confronting the silence surrounding mental health, advocating for equitable access to menstrual hygiene products, or participating in peacebuilding initiatives, they are carving out spaces for empowerment and change. These stories highlight the necessity of greater support and societal shifts and the immense strength of women who, despite facing systemic obstacles, continue to fight for a better future.

In this issue, we delve into the intersection of mental health, gender inequality, and economic strife, underscoring the urgency of addressing these multi-layered challenges. The articles highlight how societal expectations, cultural stigmas, and lack of access to basic health and hygiene products

can strip women of their peace, dignity, and opportunities. This issue invites readers to reflect on the broader societal issues affecting women and encourages actionable steps toward creating an environment where women can thrive without fear, shame, or limitation. It is a call to recognize that women's voices, struggles, and victories must be at the forefront of the conversation about peace and equality in Zimbabwe.

This collection of articles shines a light on some of the most pressing issues affecting women's peace, well-being, and inclusion in society. From the hidden struggles of perinatal depression to the cultural taboos surrounding menstruation, the systemic inequalities laid bare through Gukurahundi, and the economic hard-ships that perpetuate social instability, the narratives here are a clarion call for awareness, action, and change.

Moreover, we explore the essential roles that traditional leaders, young women, and community initiatives play in cultivating peace and rebuilding social cohesion in Zimbabwe. Whether by advocating for gender inclusion in peace processes, creating safe spaces for dialogue, or addressing historical grievances, each article brings to the fore the necessity of community-driven solutions and inclusive leadership. As you read through these pages, we hope you are





inspired by the strength, resilience, and voices of the women who continue to fight for their place in shaping a more peaceful and equitable society.

Peace is more than the absence of conflict. It is the presence of justice, equality, and opportunity for all, especially for women. We believe that lasting peace is not just a possibility but a necessity through continuous dialogue,

education, and collaborative efforts.

Thank you for joining us in amplifying the voices of those who often go unheard. Together, we can foster a culture of peace that embraces and uplifts every woman.

Sincerely, The Editorial Team





The Hidden Struggles of Perinatal Depression in 7imbabwe

By Vanessa Sithole

In Zimbabwe, where the vibrant culture and resilient spirit of its people shine, there exists a silent crisis that disrupts the peace of countless women. Perinatal depression, a condition that encompasses both prenatal and postnatal depression, remains largely unspoken and unaddressed. This hidden struggle not only affects the mental health of women but also impacts their families and communities. As we explore the depths of this issue. we reveal the urgent need for awareness, understanding, and support.

Perinatal depression is a complex condition that can strike during pregnancy or after childbirth. It is characterized by persistent feelings of sadness. anxiety, and fatigue that interfere with a woman's ability to function. In Zimbabwe, the prevalence of this condition is high, yet it remains underdiagnosed and undertreated. The stigma surrounding mental health, coupled with limited access to healthcare services. leaves many women to suffer in silence.

In many parts of Zimbabwe, discussing mental health issues is taboo. Women are often expected to bear their burdens quietly, adhering to the societal norms that dictate strength and resilience. This cultural silence means that many women do not seek help for their depression, fearing judgment and rejection from their communities. Philosopher Epictetus once said, "We suffer more often in imagination than in reality." For these women, the fear of stigma is as debilitating as the depression itself.

The peace of a woman enduring perinatal depression is profoundly disturbed. The constant battle with overwhelming emotions and the pressure to maintain societal expectations can lead to isolation and helplessness. This internal turmoil can be exacerbated by the external pressures of poverty, domestic violence, and lack of social support, which are prevalent in many areas of Zimbabwe.

The face of perinatal depression is diverse, affecting women from all walks of life. However, certain factors can increase the risk and severity of this condition, making it even more challenging for some women to cope.

Zimbabwe has faced significant economic challenges, with many families living below the poverty line. For





pregnant women and new mothers, the financial strain can be overwhelming. The inability to provide for their children, coupled with the stress of daily survival, can trigger or exacerbate perinatal depression. As the philosopher Aristotle noted, "Poverty is the parent of revolution and crime," and in this context, it is the parent of mental health struggles as well.



Domestic violence is another critical issue that affects the peace of women in Zimbabwe. The stress and trauma of an abusive relationship can lead to severe mental health issues, including perinatal depression. Women who are victims of domestic violence often have limited access to support services, making it difficult for them to escape their circumstances and seek help for their depression.

Access to mental health care in Zimbabwe is limited, particularly in rural areas. Many women do not have access to the necessary medical services to diagnose and treat perinatal depression. The healthcare system is often overwhelmed, and mental health is not always a priority. This lack of support leaves many women without the resources they need to manage their condition and regain their peace.

To address the hidden struggles of perinatal depression, it is essential to break the silence and create an environment where women feel safe to seek help. This requires a multifaceted approach that includes raising awareness, improving access to healthcare, and providing social support.

Education and awareness campaigns are crucial in changing societal attitudes towards mental health. By educating communities about the realities of perinatal depression, we can reduce stigma and encourage more women to seek help. Philosopher Seneca wisely said, "Every new beginning comes from another beginning's end." By ending the silence, we can begin a new chapter of understanding and support for women struggling with this condition.

Improving access to healthcare services is essential for addressing peri-

natal depression. This includes training healthcare providers to recognize and treat mental health conditions and ensuring that women in all areas have access to these services. Mobile clinics and telehealth services can effectively reach women in remote areas, providing them with the support they need.

Social support is a critical component of managing perinatal depression. Support groups, community programs, and family counseling can provide women with the emotional support they need to cope with their condition. Encouraging women to share their experiences can help to break down the barriers of isolation and create a sense of community and understanding.

Perinatal depression is a silent crisis that disrupts the peace of women in Zimbabwe. We can create a society where women feel supported and valued by breaking the silence and addressing the factors contributing to this condition. As philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche said, "He who has a way to live can bear almost any how." By understanding and addressing the why behind perinatal depression, we can help women bear the how and reclaim their peace.

The journey towards addressing perinatal depression in Zimbabwe is a challenging one, but it is a journey that must be undertaken. By raising awareness, improving healthcare access, and providing social support, we can ensure that no woman must suffer in silence. The peace and well-being of women are essential for the health and prosperity of our communities, and it is our collective responsibility to ensure that they are supported and valued.



Cultivating a Culture of Peace in Zimbabwe: The Role of Traditional Leaders

In a world often marred by conflict and division, this year's International Day of Peace theme, "Cultivating a Culture of Peace," poignantly reminds us of our collective responsibility to foster harmony and understanding. This theme underscores the importance of nurturing peace within our communities and across generations, emphasizing that peace is not merely the absence of conflict but a proactive commitment to dialogue, mutual respect, and cooperation.

A culture of peace is built on the foundation of values such as empathy, tolerance, and justice. It involves creating environments where individuals feel safe, respected, and valued. This culture starts at the grassroots level, within families, schools, and local communities, and extends to national and international arenas. By instilling these values from an early age, we can ensure that the ideals of peace permeate across generations and geographic boundaries.

Cultivating a culture of peace is particularly crucial for Zimbabwe. The nation has experienced its share of political and social upheavals, which have left deep scars on its communities. By fostering a culture of peace,

Zimbabwe can address these historical wounds and build a more cohesive and resilient society.

Traditional leaders in Zimbabwe hold a unique and influential position in promoting peace. As custodians of culture and tradition, they are deeply respected and trusted within their communities. Their role in peacebuilding is multifaceted.

Traditional leaders often mediate local disputes, using their authority and wisdom to resolve conflicts amicably. Their deep understanding of local customs and traditions enables them to offer culturally relevant solutions that are more likely to be accepted by all parties involved.

Traditional leaders can help bridge divides within communities by fostering a sense of unity and belonging. They can also organize and lead community dialogues encouraging open communication and mutual understanding, reducing tensions and preventing conflicts

Traditional leaders can advocate for nonviolent approaches to conflict resolution and promote the values of empathy, respect, and cooperation. Their endorsement of peaceful practices can significantly impact community behaviour and attitudes.

Traditional leaders can play a crucial role in educating their communities about the importance of peace and the detrimental effects of conflict. They can raise awareness and inspire collective action toward peace-building through storytelling, public speeches, and community gatherings. Traditional leaders can collaborate with government officials, non-governmental organizations, and other community leaders to implement peacebuilding initiatives. Their in-

volvement ensures that these initiatives are culturally sensitive and have the support of the local population.

As we observe the International Day of Peace, let us reflect on the steps to cultivate a culture of peace in our lives and communities. In Zimbabwe, traditional leaders play a pivotal role in this endeavour. They can help build a more harmonious and just society by leveraging their influence and wisdom. Peace is not a distant dream but a tangible reality that we can achieve through collective effort and unwavering commitment.





Empowering Young Women as Peacebuilders: Bridging the Gap in Conflict Resolution

By Tinotenda Marindiko

Young women are vital stakeholders in peacebuilding and conflict resolution, vet they often encounter significant obstacles to meaningful participation. This article examines the imperative of enhancing young women's involvement in peace processes and offers practical strategies to overcome these challenges. Young women face numerous barriers to participation in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. including gender stereotypes and biases that perpetuate discrimination and marginalization, limited access to education and training, hindering their capacity to engage effectively, exclusion from decision-making spaces, silencing their voices and perspectives, and security concerns and violence, which disproportionately affect young women.

To address these challenges, the following strategies can be employed: capacity-building programs and training, equipping young women with essential skills and knowledge; mentorship and leadership development, fostering confidence and empowerment; inclusive policy frameworks and quotas, ensuring representation and

participation; community ment and outreach, amplifying young women's voices and perspectives: and technology-enabled participation, leveraging digital platforms to expand reach and accessibility. To ensure effective implementation of these strategies, consider the following best practices: ensure gender-sensitive language and messaging, recognizing the diverse experiences and needs of young women; foster collaborative relationships with local organizations, promoting ownership and sustainability; provide safe spaces for young women's participation, guaranteeing their security and comfort; and support intersectional approaches, addressing multiple forms of discrimination and marginalization.

Enhancing young women's participation in peacebuilding and conflict resolution is crucial for sustainable peace and development. By acknowledging their challenges and implementing inclusive strategies, we can empower young women as peacebuilders and change-makers, ultimately strengthening the foundations of peace and prosperity.





Peace is more than the absence of conflict

Peace is often considered a lofty, abstract concept, but it has real and tangible effects on my community. Some think of peace as just a dream or an idea, but it is a physical reality that can be earned through hard work and dedication. In my community, we face many challenges while we try to promote peace, challenges like poverty, inequality, and discrimination. However, we also have many examples of efforts that can build peace. These examples include peace marches and youth empowerment. Knowing that peace is not static but a dynamic force that evolves with time is essential to pursuing peace in our community.

To promote peace, we must consider our community's complex and interconnected nature. Understanding the historical, cultural, and political factors that shape our community and contribute to conflict is essential and empowering. It gives us the

knowledge we need to make a real difference. Addressing the root causes of conflict can create a more just and equitable society that values all its members' dignity and humanity. Pursuing peace in our community is an ongoing and dynamic process that requires dialogue, cooperation, and understanding between different groups and individuals.

We must continually engage in dialogue to understand different perspectives and to find common ground. We must be willing to listen to each other even when we disagree and to find creative solutions to our problems. Promoting peace also requires us to work together across lines of difference, including race, class, gender, and religion. We must find ways to bridge these divisions and build a more inclusive and harmonious society.

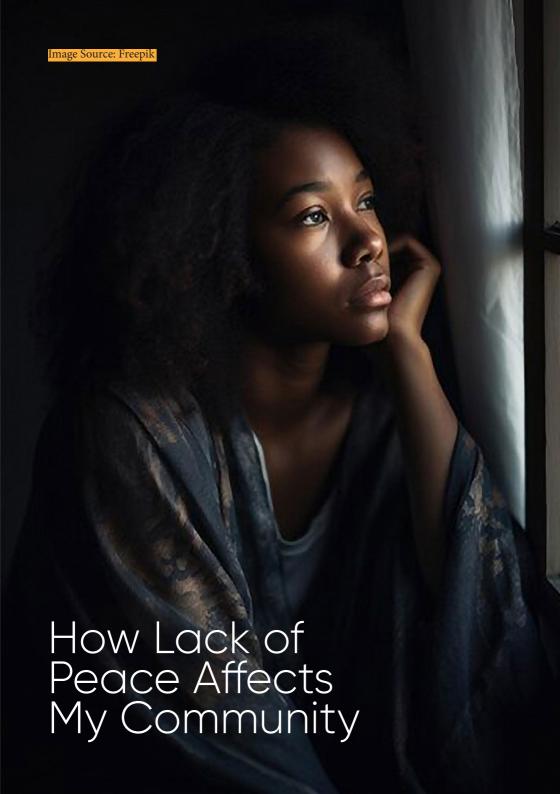
It is easy to become discouraged by



conflict's seemingly intractable nature and to give up hope for peace. However, we must resist these negative impulses and remain committed to the pursuit of peace. Peace is not achieved overnight but requires patience, persistence, and dedication. It's a long journey, but one that we are committed to. We must work together daily and person by person to create a more just and peaceful society.

Building peace in our community is about addressing immediate conflicts and creating the conditions for peace to flourish in the long term. This means investing in all community members' education, health, and well-being regardless of their background. It means creating opportunities for people to find meaningful work and contribute to the common good. It also means working to dismantle systems of oppression and inequality that perpetuate conflict and division. By addressing these underlying issues, we can create a more just and equitable society that values the dignity and humanity of all its members.





The lack of peace in my community has many adverse effects. These effects can lead to violence, crime, and distrust. They can also hinder economic development and limit opportunities for education and growth. To promote peace, we must first understand the root causes of conflict. We must also work to address these issues through dialogue, cooperation, and understanding. We can practice promoting peace in many ways in our community.

To promote peace, we can educate others about conflict resolution and nonviolent communication and create opportunities for dialogue and understanding between different groups. We must also engage in community peace-building activities such as volunteer work, community events, and support efforts to address poverty, inequality, and discrimination.

The promotion of peace requires a commitment from all members of our community. We must all be willing to work together to build a more just and peaceful society. Remembering the inspiring potential of forgiveness and reconciliation to promote peace is also essential. Forgiveness is a powerful tool that can help us heal from past hurts and move forward positively. Reconciliation involves working together to address past wrongs and build a more just and harmonious society. These are not just concepts but powerful tools that can motivate and commit us to the cause of peace.

Forgiveness and reconciliation can be challenging, but they are essential for healing the wounds of conflict and promoting peace in our community. Many examples illustrate the importance of forgiveness and reconciliation in promoting peace in my community. One example is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, established after apartheid

to address past injustices and promote reconciliation between different groups. Promoting peace and justice is not only the responsibility of international organisations and governments. It also requires individuals and communities' active engagement and participation at the local level.

Small peace-building efforts, such as community dialogues, nonviolent resistance movements, and community-led initiatives to address poverty and inequalities, can powerfully promote peace and justice in our community. However, they require a multifaceted approach that includes leadership. international cooperation, and grassroots engagement. By working together and committing ourselves to forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace, we can create a more iust and harmonious society for all.

"The promotion of peace requires a commit-ment from all members of our community..."



The Impact of the Economy on Peace in Zimbabwe



Zimbabwe faces significant economic challenges, including inflation, unemployment, and poverty. These issues affect the country's financial stability and have profound implications for peace and social cohesion. The economic crisis in Zimbabwe exacerbates social tensions and undermines national stability.

Economic hardships in Zimbabwe contribute to various forms of social unrest and instability. High inflation and unemployment rates lead to widespread social unrest and protests as people struggle to meet their basic needs. Increased crime rates are another consequence, as economic desperation drives some individuals to engage in illegal activities. Food insecurity and humanitarian crises are prevalent, with many Zimbabweans facing hunger and malnutrition. Additionally, financial instability leads to displacement and migration as people seek better opportunities elsewhere. For instance, the World Bank reported that Zimbabwe's inflation rate reached 676% in March 2023. highlighting the severity of the economic crisis.

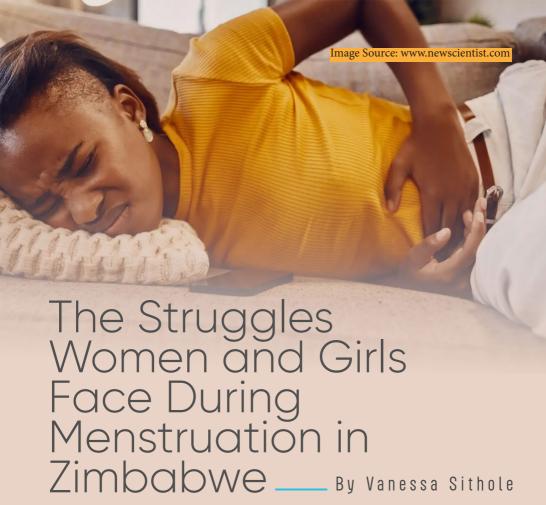
Poverty and inequality are significant drivers of social discontent in Zimbabwe. Economic inequality undermines social cohesion and trust in institutions, leading to political instability. When large segments of the population feel marginalized and excluded from economic opportunities, it fosters resentment and disillusionment. Research indicates that countries

with high levels of economic inequality are more prone to conflict and unrest. In Zimbabwe, the Gini coefficient, a measure of income inequality, remains high, reflecting the deep economic disparities that fuel social tensions.

Despite these challenges, there are opportunities for economic growth that can contribute to peace in Zimbabwe. Sectors such as agriculture. mining, and tourism have the potential to drive economic development. Initiatives promoting infrastructure development, education, and skills training can create jobs and improve livelihoods. Entrepreneurship grams can empower individuals and foster economic resilience. Success stories, such as community-based tourism projects and agricultural cooperatives, demonstrate the potential for economic growth to support peacebuilding efforts.

The interconnections between 7 imbabwe's economy and peace are evident. Economic instability exacerbates social tensions and undermines national stability, while economic growth and development can contribute to peace. Addressing the economic challenges requires comprehensive reforms and investment in peacebuilding initiatives. Policymakers, stakeholders, and international partners must work together to create an environment conducive to economic growth and social cohesion. By doing so, Zimbabwe can build a foundation for sustainable peace and prosperity.





In Zimbabwe, the natural process of menstruation has become a source of stress, shame, and missed opportunities for many women and girls. The inability to afford or access sanitary wear disrupts their daily lives, affecting their health, education, and overall well-being. This article delves into the profound impact of this issue, exploring how the lack of sanitary pads erodes confidence and peace and what can be done to ensure that every woman and girl can manage her period with dignity and comfort.

Sanitary wear, including pads, tampons, and menstrual cups, is cru-

cial for the hygiene and comfort of women during their menstrual cycles. Menstruation is a natural biological process, but without the proper products, it can become a source of discomfort, embarrassment, and even severe health risks. For women and girls in Zimbabwe, the lack of access to these products often means missing school, work, and other daily activities, which can have long-term impacts on their education and economic opportunities.

The absence of sanitary wear forces many women and girls to use improvised materials such as rags, leaves, or newspapers. These materials are uncomfortable and can lead to infections and other health complications. The lack of proper sanitation facilities exacerbates these issues, making it difficult for women to maintain basic hygiene during their periods.

Having access to sanitary wear directly impacts a woman's confidence and self-esteem. The fear of leaking and the stigma associated with menstruation can cause significant anxiety and stress. In a society where menstruation is often considered taboo, this fear is magnified, leading to social withdrawal and isolation. For young girls, this can mean missing out on crucial educational opportunities and social interactions vital for their development.

Zimbabwe is battling numerous economic challenges, and the impact of these challenges on women's access to sanitary wear is profound. The high cost of sanitary products, coupled with widespread poverty, means that many women and girls cannot afford

these essentials. According to a Ministry of Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprises Development study, about 72% of rural schoolgirls do not use sanitary pads because they are too expensive.

The economic situation in Zimbabwe has led to hyperinflation and a significant increase in the cost of living. Sanitary pads, which are imported. are often priced out of reach for the average woman. In rural areas, where most of the population lives below the poverty line, the situation is even more dire. Women and girls must prioritize food and other basic needs over sanitary products. The lack of sanitary wear directly impacts education for girls in Zimbabwe. Many girls miss several days of school each month due to their periods, which results in a significant loss of learning time. This absenteeism can lead to poor academic performance and higher dropout rates. The inability to manage menstruation with dignity and comfort is a significant barrier to education for girls, limiting their fu-



ture opportunities and perpetuating the cycle of poverty.

The social stigma surrounding menstruation in Zimbabwe fuels the challenges faced by women and girls. The cultural silence around the topic means that many girls are unprepared for their first period and do not have access to accurate information about menstrual health. This lack of knowledge and the absence of sanitary wear can lead to feelings of shame and embarrassment. The psychological impact of these experiences can be long-lasting, affecting women's confidence and ability to engage fully in society.

The lack of access to sanitary wear is a significant disruptor of peace for women in Zimbabwe. It affects their physical health, mental well-being, and ability to participate in daily life. The constant worry about managing their periods without proper products adds a laver of stress to their already challenging lives. The use of improvised materials can cause chafing, rashes, and infections. These health issues can become severe if left untreated, leading to more serious conditions such as urinary tract infections and reproductive health problems. The lack of access to clean water and sanitation facilities further compounds these risks, making it difficult for women to maintain proper hygiene.

Addressing the issue of sanitary wear access in Zimbabwe requires a multifaceted approach that includes policy changes, community initiatives, and education. Improving access to hygienic products can enhance the health, well-being, and opportunities of women and girls in Zimbabwe. One of the most effective ways to address the issue is through policy changes and government support. This can include subsidizing the cost of sanitary products, reducing import taxes,

and providing free sanitary products in schools and communities. The government can also support local production of sanitary products, which can reduce costs and create jobs. Community initiatives and support from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are crucial in improving access to sanitary wear. Programs that distribute free sanitary products, provide education on menstrual health. and create safe spaces for women to discuss their experiences can have a significant impact. NGOs can also work with local communities to break the stigma surrounding menstruation and promote gender equality.

Empowering women and girls to manage their periods with dignity and confidence is a crucial goal. This empowerment is achieved through education and awareness, which are critical components of any solution. By providing accurate information about menstrual health and hygiene, we can equip women and girls with the necessary knowledge. This can include school-based education programs, community workshops, and media campaigns, all of which help break the cultural silence around menstruation. reduce stigma, and promote a more inclusive society.

Access to sanitary wear is a fundamental right that affects every aspect of a woman's life. In Zimbabwe, the lack of access to these essential products disrupts the peace and well-being of women and girls, affecting their health, confidence, and opportunities. By addressing this issue through policy changes, community initiatives, education, and local production, we can improve the lives of women and girls in Zimbabwe and promote gender equality. Ensuring that every woman and girl has access to sanitary wear is not just a matter of health and hygiene; it is a matter of dignity, empowerment, and human rights.





Gukurahundi's Impact on Peace in Zimbabwe

Gukurahundi, a Shona word meaning "the early rain that washes away the chaff before the spring harvest," refers to a period of intense violence and repression in Zimbabwe from 1982 to 1987. During this time, the government, led by President Robert Mugabe, launched a campaign to eliminate perceived opposition, particularly in the Ndebele-speaking regions.

Gukurahundi exacerbated inter-ethnic tensions between the Shona and Ndebele people, creating deep-seated hatred and mistrust. The violence and atrocities committed during Gukurahundi left many survivors with severe trauma and PTSD, affecting their ability to rebuild their lives and contribute to peace.

The government's failure to acknowledge and address Gukurahundi's atrocities has hindered reconciliation and perpetuated a culture of impunity. It also reinforced regional divisions, with the Ndebele-speaking areas remaining economically and socially marginalized.

The regime's use of violence and repression during Gukurahundi solidified its authoritarian grip on power, suppressing dissent and opposition,

a precedent for future human rights abuses, including arbitrary arrests and torture accompanied by extrajudicial killings.

The trauma and divisions caused by Gukurahundi have compromised social cohesion, challenging building a unified and peaceful society.

Many families still await justice and closure for their loved ones who disappeared or were killed during Gukurahundi. The Ndebele-speaking regions remain economically and socially marginalized, perpetuating disparities and tensions. Nevertheless, reconciliation and amendments can be made through various techniques. The government must constantly acknowledge and apologize for the atrocities committed during Gukurahundi.

Inclusive governance and representation should also be established to address the needs and concerns of all communities without stigmatization and tribalism. Reconciling Gukurahundi's legacy is essential for building a peaceful and united Zimbabwe. Addressing the past and promoting accountability, justice, and inclusivity can help heal the wounds of the past and create a brighter future for all Zimbabweans





Building Peace: A Pathway to Lasting Harmony By Sithembiso N. Ndebele

The quest for peace remains crucial in a world often marked by conflict and division. Building peace is not merely the absence of war; it is a proactive process that fosters understanding, cooperation, and trust among individuals and communities. This article explores peacebuilding's essential components, strategies, and challenges, highlighting its significance in creating a more harmonious world.

Peacebuilding encompasses various activities to prevent conflict and foster reconciliation in post-conflict societies. It involves addressing the root causes of violence—such as inequality,

injustice, and historical grievancesand creating conditions that promote sustainable peace. Early intervention is vital to prevent disputes from escalating into violence. This can involve dialogue, mediation, and community engagement to identify and address potential sources of conflict before they become serious issues. Healing relationships after conflict is essential. Reconciliation processes often include truth-telling, acknowledging past injustices, and creating spaces for dialogue among affected communities. Empowering individuals and communities with conflict resolution, negotiation, and communication skills



fosters resilience and equips them to handle disputes peacefully. Ensuring that marginalized groups—such as women, youth, and ethnic minorities—are included in peace processes enhances legitimacy and effectiveness. Diverse perspectives contribute to more comprehensive solutions.: Understanding and respecting cultural differences can help bridge divides and foster mutual respect among conflicting parties.

Grassroots initiatives, often the backbone of peacebuilding, yield the most sustainable results. Local leaders, organizations, and citizens should be actively involved in peace-building to ensure solutions are culturally relevant and widely accepted. Promoting peace education in schools and communities helps instill values of tolerance and understanding in future generations. Teaching conflict resolution skills empowers individuals to resolve disputes amicably. Addressing economic disparities can reduce tensions that lead to conflict. Job creation, resource access, and local infrastructure investment can alleviate frustrations and foster stability. Continuous assessment of peace-building initiatives allows for adaptation and improvement over time. Learning from both successes and failures is crucial for refining strategies.

Despite its importance, peacebuilding faces numerous challenges: The commitment of local leaders and governments is essential. Without political support, peace initiatives may falter or be undermined. Funding constraints can hinder the implementation of effective peace-building programs, making it difficult to sustain efforts over time. Deep-rooted beliefs and historical narratives can complicate reconciliation efforts, making it challenging to bridge Geopolitical interests. External interventions can complicate local peace-building ef-

forts, sometimes exacerbating tensions rather than alleviating them. Real-World Example is South Africa: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) played a pivotal role in healing the nation post-apartheid by providing a platform for victims and perpetrators to share their stories. Building peace is an ongoing journev that requires dedication, collaboration, and a deep understanding of the complexities of human relationships. We can create environments where individuals coexist harmoniously by addressing the underlying causes of conflict and fostering inclusive dialogue. The path to lasting peace is challenging but essential for the well-being of societies worldwide. Through collective efforts—at local. national, and international levels-we can cultivate a culture of peace that benefits everyone.

"Reconciliation processes often include truth-telling, acknowledging past injustices, and creating spaces for dialogue among affected communities..."





Conflict is inevitable in all human interactions because it stems from differences in interests, values, expectations, and opinions between individuals. Conflict also arises from dif-

ferences in perceptions of the world around us. Though considered adversity, conflict, if handled properly, can strengthen human relations and foster peaceful environments that allow



people to thrive. This article explores conflict resolution at the societal level by implementing effective communication to achieve peace.

People react to the changing world as it is experienced and perceived through their interpretation. We don't respond to the actual change but to our interpretation. The following person may see what someone sees as a threat as an opportunity to grow, thus, a conflict in perception. Narrowing it down to human interaction. sometimes we fight with the next person because of what we think the problem is and not necessarily what the problem is, and they respond to our interpretation of the events, further blowing things out of proportion. Thus, effective communication is essential to promote peace in society from the familial level to the world. In the face of conflict, people either explode and unintentionally say hurtful things to each other or withdraw in anger and give silent treatment to express displeasure. Sometimes, we become defensive and play the victim, turning conflict resolution into a debate instead of a discussion. In a debate, everyone seeks to justify themselves and crush the next person's line of thought; thus, no understanding is reached. Other barriers to effective communication include failing to express or voice out one's needs and only listening to respond. Additionally, shunning away from vulnerability in the face of conflict plunges the parties involved into operating from a stance of assuming what the next person thinks or feels, leading to more disagreements.

However, according to Queensland (2022), Effective Communication involves transmitting information and receiving an acknowledgment that our targeted audience has received and understood it. It also means providing acknowledgment to others

that ensures they feel heard and understood. Effective communication entails empathy. Empathy seeks to understand the next person's perspective and frame of reference. A frame of reference causes one to act the way they do, and sometimes our portrayed behaviours stem from hidden buried past traumas that we never challenged. To be effective communicators, we ought to be curious to know what the next person thinks, which drives every cause of action. Effective communication is learning to pause and recollect one's thoughts in conflict and ask the right questions instead of destructive questions that foster manipulation and defensiveness. Being a good communicator means being a good listener. We often listen to responses while calculating what we will say to refute what the next person says. However, being a good listener means suspending our intrusive internal thoughts and paying full attention to the next person to understand and not just hear them. Effective communication fights the problem, not the person; it is solution oriented. If we practice effective communication in our relations in society and our families, we can foster healthy environments even for the vounger generation, thus equipping them to be future peacebuilders.

"In the face of conflict, people either explode and unintentionally say hurtful things to each other or withdraw in anger and give silent treatment to express displeasure..."





Negotiations and Conflict Resolution in a Blended Family

A stepfamily faces conflicts almost daily as it navigates its new dynamic. It is crucial to guide them on how to communicate and find harmony. They need to know how to resolve conflicts in their blended family by addressing issues with patience, empathy, and mutual respect. Seeking professional help can help them work through their differences and create strong, loving bonds that last a lifetime.

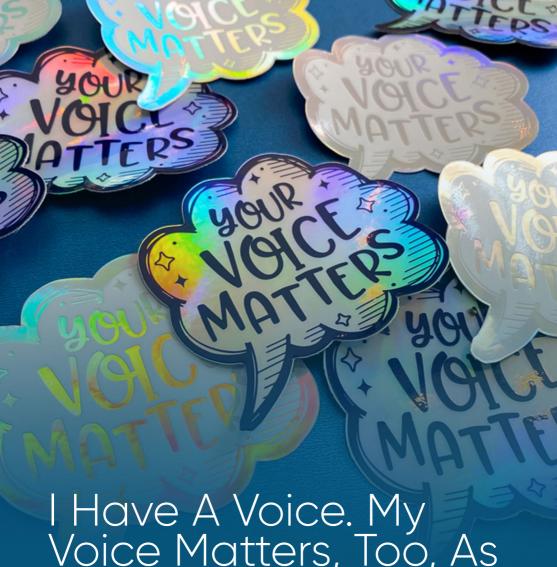
Before blending families, agreeing with your new partner on how you intend to parent together is essential and making any necessary adjustments to your parenting styles before you remarry. This will make for a smoother transition, and your children won't become angry at your new spouse for initiating changes. Failure to do so can be complicated for children to navigate. Children's most significant struggle is dealing with the loss of the family they once had or hoped to have and finding ways of maintaining loyalties in the new family setup.

Unfortunately, the negative effects of conflict among family members can vary. Children are likely to experience fear, worry, and anger. If the conflict is highly intense, they may experience emotional trauma, depression,

and stress. No one feels safe during the unresolved conflict, primarily when the arguments are centred on the children. Balancing relationships between biological and step relationships is crucial as it brings peace to the family.

Aligning parenting styles is essential before merging families because children's emotional well-being is crucial. By prioritizing open communication, empathy, and mutual respect, a blended family can create a harmonious and supportive environment where everyone thrives. With time, love, and commitment, stepfamilies can become a testament to the power of love and unity, providing a nurturing space for children to grow and flourish.

In the tapestry of a blended family, every thread of conflict is an opportunity to weave a stronger, more loving bond. Through the lens of love and unity, challenges can be transformed into stepping stones for growth and harmony. In the end, blended families remind us that love is the glue that holds us together, even in the most challenging times.



Voice Matters, Too, As A Young Woman

By Nichollate Ndlovu

"When women succeed, nations are more safe and secure."- Michelle Obama

As a young woman, most of the time I usually face lot of challenges when I speak out. The assertion that my "voice matters" is not just a personal affirmation; it is a powerful statement about women's essential role in shaping our societies, especially in peacebuilding initiatives. I firmly believe including young women in peacebuilding processes is vital for creating sustainable peace and addressing our daily unique challenges.

When young women participate in peacebuilding, they bring new perspectives and innovative ideas. Our experiences often reflect the realities of conflicts and their aftermath. When voung women are included in peace process, we can advocate for issues that directly affect us. This is a way of making sure that there is inclusivity within communities. As a young woman who has been involved in peacebuilding dialogues with the Girls Table organisation, I feel I have been empowered. I can now be influential in my community as I ensure young women participate in peacebuilding processes.

When I see young women participating in peacebuilding initiatives, it inspires a sense of agency and encourages me as a young woman to participate more in civic activities. As I participate in civic activities. I realize that I can do it and I can make a difference, too. I remember I attended a Zoom meeting on educational challenges in conflict zones, especially on the challenges faced by the Taliban girls, where a voung woman shared her experiences in advocating for the inclusion of women in peacebuilding, mainly by standing in for the girls to be allowed to continue with their education. Hearing this motivated me to continue advocating for the inclusion of women in every aspect of the community because their voices also matter.

Within the global community, there seems to be an increase in recognising the importance of young women in peacebuilding. This is so encouraging to me as a young person to continue being involved in peacebuilding initiatives. Initiatives like the Women. Peace, and Security agenda emphasize that our participation is not just a benefit to us but a necessity for effective peace processes. This recognition underscores the idea that women's voices, including those young women, must be integrated into every aspect of peacebuilding to ensure that the resulting frameworks are inclusive and sustainable.

As a young woman, my voice matters in the realm of peacebuilding. It is essential that, as young women, we continue to advocate for our inclusion in the processes, ensuring that our perspectives are heard and addressed. If we become silent, no one is going to stand up for us because we are the game changers for the coming generation, and our voices matter also. When we speak up as young women, we not only contribute to peaceful communities, but we pave the way for future generations of women to take their rightful places in shaping society.

"When young women participate in peacebuilding, they bring new perspectives and innovative ideas..."



Please Note: The views and opinions expressed by the contributors are not the views of the Girls Table

the.girlstable



f The Girls Table



y table_girls