



***Organised Violence and Torture and
its Effects on Children***

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July 2013

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The shift away from undemocratic methods of gaining and maintaining political power has led many African autocrats to seek electoral strategies for keeping power. Recent research indicates that one-fifth of elections in Africa are violent, and, in many cases, this violence occurs before elections take place (usually by incumbents): Zimbabwe, for example, has shown this for the 2000 Parliamentary elections, the 2002 Presidential election, and the 2008 Presidential re-run. In other cases, violence that occurs after elections, is generally more violent than pre-election violence, and is mostly precipitated by the challengers.

Thus, our understanding about political violence becomes more nuanced. There is violence that takes place in countries but falls short of so-called “armed conflict.” Such violence will be more short-lived than would be necessary to be defined as “armed conflict”, but can have very profound effects on citizens and a country as a whole.

One of the more disturbing features of elections in Zimbabwe has been the use of schools as both places where political campaigning takes place and even their use as so-called “bases” for militia activity. By implication, the use of schools as places of political activity (and even worse as places of violence) will involve children in witnessing events harmful to their psychological and moral development, and there is worrying evidence to this effect in Zimbabwe.

The concerns about schools as places that become targets in armed conflict has now attracted international concern with the establishment of the Global Campaign to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA). This campaign, to which the Research and Advocacy Unit (RAU) is a participating member, has been raising international opinion about the dangers faced by children and teachers during armed conflict. This initiative is strongly bolstered by the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1998 of 2011.¹

This desk top study is an attempt to at least quantify the risks using data from the past decade in Zimbabwe. It was not possible to provide any estimate of the consequences of these risks for children, but at least specifying the probable risks does allow some estimate of the scale of the needed response for Zimbabwean children.

The Political Violence Monthly Reports of the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum were examined for cases of political violence where children were involved. This involved looking at all the reports produced between July 2001 and December 2008. Three categories of cases were developed:

- Those where children were specifically identified as being victims of or direct witnesses to political violence;
- Those cases where violence occurred at schools, involving violence against teachers, violence taking place at schools, or schools being used as “bases”;
- Those cases where violent attacks took place at citizens’ homes, where the implication is that children may have been involved, but children are not mentioned specifically.

¹ This resolution expanded the criteria for listing parties to conflict in the Secretary-General’s report on children and armed conflict to include parties that attack or threaten schools and hospitals.

The key findings were as follows:

1. On violence against children:

103 cases were identified in which children had either been direct victims or were directly mentioned as being present where violence took place. 67% of these were 5 years old or younger. The worst years for violence were election years. Displacement, assault and families getting separated were the most frequent violations. As regards the witnessing of violations, this was again worse in election years, with assault being far and away the most frequently reported violation. Property destruction featured as the next most recurrent violation that children witnessed. The arson probably associated with displacement given that homesteads were targeted.

The most frequently reported perpetrators were youth militia, ZANU PF supporters, and, surprisingly, the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP).

2. On violence at schools:

89 cases were found where there was a report of violence at a school or against a teacher. The most commonly reported violations that caused some form of disruption to school activities were schools being used as “bases” or schools being closed for reasons related to politics, such as teachers being expelled for their supposed political beliefs. The worst years were the election years of 2002 and 2008.

Cases of violence involving pupils were more commonly seen in 2001 and 2002, but also in 2003 and 2008, with forced attendance at rallies (40%), dismissal from school or forced to flee (33%), abduction (13%) and assault (13%) being the most common violations reported.

Violations against teachers were more common during the election years of 2002 and 2008, but also in 2001 between the 2000 and 2002 elections but predominantly related to the elections in 2002. The violations against the teachers were serious: assault (26%), forced to flee (17%), threats (17%), and property destruction (11%).

3. On violence at family homes:

Here 254 cases were identified from the Human Rights Forum reports, with 2008 being the worst year for reports of violence, but 2001, 2002, and 2003 all having reports with relatively high frequency, and continuing the trends seen above. The most commonly reported violations were the witnessing of violence (29%) and displacement (27%). The most commonly identified perpetrators were ZANU PF supporters (31%), ZANU PF Youth (24%), and youth militia (18%), which has been the common finding in most human rights reports, and not merely in respect of children.

It seems evident from the data examined that very young children, many under 5 years and, certainly given the large number of primary schools, young children anyhow, were witnessing serious violence, and mostly perpetrated against their caretaking adults. The data relating to the witnessing of human rights violations indicated that there was a much greater risk of children witnessing violence and experiencing very traumatic events such as having their homes destroyed, becoming seriously impoverished through the theft or destruction of the family's possessions, and then being displaced from their community, probably ending up as internally displaced.

Similarly, the disruption to schooling, the attacks on teachers (and their frequent displacement), and, worst of all, the use of schools for political activities and even as places where violence and intimidation occur, can have profoundly negative consequences for children. It was noted that children were frequently forced to attend political rallies where it can be made manifestly plain to children the risks involved in political activity, never mind the more odious implication that children are being politically indoctrinated. It was also plain from these cases that teachers were viewed as untrustworthy people in the community, and can be publicly humiliated and physically attacked, which hardly creates the kind of climate in schools necessary for safe learning.

This data does not permit any analysis of the actual harm, physical and psychological, that these child victims might have suffered, nor can this data give any understanding of the magnitude of the problem. It can be inferred from the very brief review of the international literature that the consequences to children are not likely to be any less serious than those to adults, and, if the trends seen from this examination of the reported cases are actually very extensive, then Zimbabwe is facing a rehabilitation problem of considerable magnitude.

This requires urgent action by government to ensure that schools become and remain Zones of Peace, especially during elections. In addition, there is an urgent need to understand the scale of the existing problem (and the extent of the harm suffered by children) in order that an appropriate preventative and rehabilitative strategy be developed.

1. Background

Elections are always a high stakes game, and, in many countries, particularly as it seems in many African countries, the effects of losing have uncomfortable consequences for many political parties. These effects increase for the many autocrats that have governed African countries for lengthy periods. As Posner and Young have pointed out, the shift away from undemocratic methods of gaining and maintaining political power has led many African autocrats to seek electoral strategies for keeping power, bolstered in many cases by attempts to manipulate the constitution in order to increase the number of terms that they might serve as presidents².

However, even if ruling presidents can manipulate the constitution in order to keep having the possibility of being re-elected, they still have to win elections, and, where long-standing rulers are unpopular (as is frequently the case), they may have to resort to undesirable methods in order to do so. As a recent analysis of violence in African elections points out:

To summarise, the main finding is that significant electoral violence is not as frequent as critics suggest, but frequent enough to cause serious concern for advocates. That significant violence occurs in nearly one fifth of all African electoral contests means that advocates should pay attention to the risk that democratic elections can trigger. A secondary finding, which is perhaps unsurprising but still quite important, is that incumbent forces overall commit more violence than challengers do. However, conforming to expectation, where challengers engage in violence, especially significant violence, they are more likely to do so after an election occurs and, furthermore, if electoral violence occurs after the election it is likely to be at a higher level³.

Of the 41 cases of violent elections examined by Straus and Taylor, a high degree of electoral violence took place before polling in 31 cases. Zimbabwe, for example, has shown this for the 2000 Parliamentary elections, the 2002 Presidential election, and the 2008 Presidential re-run. Straus and Taylor do not include the 2008 elections as their analysis takes the period between 1990 to 2007 only; however, they do include the 2005 Parliamentary elections as an example of a poll in which there was a high degree of political violence, which many Zimbabwean commentators might dispute⁴. Thus, our understanding about political violence becomes more nuanced. There is violence that takes place in countries that falls short, and is more short-lived than so-called “armed conflict”, but can have very profound effects on citizens and a country as a whole. Recent elections in both Kenya and Zimbabwe have been violent, although the degree of violence has varied between elections, but the violence as a whole caused huge social disruption, deaths and injuries, destruction of property, amongst many various problems.

² For an analysis of how this affects Zimbabwe, see RAU (2012), *Bucking the Trend: Africa, Zimbabwe, Demand for Democracy, and Elections*. May 2012. HARARE: RESEARCH & ADVOCACY UNIT.

³ Straus, S., & Taylor, C (2009), *Democratization and Electoral Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa, 1990- 2007*. Prepared for delivery at the 2009 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, September 3-6, 2009.

⁴ There is little dispute that the 2005 elections were seriously flawed, and that there was significant intimidation, but it is doubtful that there was much violence in the sense in which the other Zimbabwean elections since 2000 were violent. See Reeler, A.P., & Chitsike, K.C (2005), *Trick or Treat? The effects of the pre-election climate on the poll in the 2005 Zimbabwe Parliamentary Elections*. June 2005. PRETORIA: IDASA.

This was evident in Zimbabwe during 2002 and 2008. One of the more disturbing features of elections in Zimbabwe has been the use of schools as both places where political campaigning takes place and even their use as so-called “bases” for militia activity. By implication, the use of schools as places of political activity (and even worse as places of violence) will involve children in witnessing events harmful to their psychological and moral development, and there is worrying evidence to this effect in Zimbabwe.

The concerns about schools as places that become targets in armed conflict has now attracted international concern with the establishment of the Global Campaign to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA). Set up by a steering committee that includes UNESCO, UNICEF, UNHCR, Save the Children, Human Rights Watch, and others, this campaign has been raising international opinion about the dangers faced by children and teachers during armed conflict. This initiative is strongly bolstered by a resolution of the United Nations Security Council in 2011⁵.

GCPEA actually lists Zimbabwe as one of the countries of concern, citing a report by Save the Children as well as local studies from Zimbabwean organisations⁶. GCPEA identifies 33 countries worldwide in which attacks against education take place, with the following 13 African countries seen as places of concern: Central African Republic, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Kenya, Libya, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, and Zimbabwe.

Not all of the concern about these African countries is about armed conflict per se, although in many of these countries there is armed conflict as would be defined as such in international humanitarian law. As pointed out above, in several countries, including Kenya and Zimbabwe, the concerns of GCPEA arise around elections, but it is evident from the analysis briefly described above that violence would be present in elections in many more countries than these two.

In Zimbabwe, the involvement of schools as “bases” i.e. places of violence and for political rallies was raised in 2000⁷, and more comprehensively described in 2002. In a report of the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum on the 2002 election, 41% of the “bases” identified were at schools⁸. A more comprehensive report, based on a survey of 1,086 teachers in 2011, found that 51% of the sample (which was nationally representative) had had direct experience of political violence in 2008, but more disturbing than this was the finding that, of this group, 47% reported that the violence had taken place at school and during working hours⁹.

⁵ Resolution 1998 (2011). Adopted by the Security Council at its 6581st meeting, on 12 July 2011. (S/RES/1998 (2011)).

⁶ *Case Studies on the Role of Politicisation of Education in Conflict-affected Countries*. UNESCO/ Save the Children, 2010; PTUZ (2012), *Every School has a Story. A Preliminary Report on Teachers Experiences of Elections in Zimbabwe*. Report produced by PTUZ and RAU. February 2012. HARARE: PROGRESSIVE TEACHERS UNION OF ZIMBABWE and RESEARCH & ADVOCACY UNIT; Pswarayi, L, & Reeler, A.P (2102), *'Fragility' and education in Zimbabwe: Assessing the impact of violence on education*. December 2012, HARARE: RESEARCH & ADVOCACY UNIT.

⁷ Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (2001), *Who was responsible? A consolidated analysis of pre-election violence in Zimbabwe*, HARARE: ZIMBABWE HUMAN RIGHTS NGO FORUM.

⁸ Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (2002), *“Are They Accountable?: Examining alleged violators and their violations pre and post the Presidential Election March 2002”*, HARARE: ZIMBABWE HUMAN RIGHTS NGO FORUM.

⁹ See again PTUZ (2012), *Every School has a Story. A Preliminary Report on Teachers' Experiences of Elections in Zimbabwe*. Report produced by PTUZ and RAU. February 2012. HARARE: PROGRESSIVE TEACHERS UNION OF ZIMBABWE and RESEARCH & ADVOCACY UNIT. See also PTUZ (2012), *Political Violence and Intimidation of Zimbabwean Teachers*. May 2012. Report prepared for the Progressive Teachers Union of Zimbabwe [PTUZ] by the Research and Advocacy Unit [RAU]. HARARE: PROGRESSIVE TEACHERS UNION OF ZIMBABWE.

It is very important to bear in mind, when thinking about the consequences for children, that this violence against teachers, and especially the violence that takes place at schools, will be witnessed by young children. Given that most violence takes place in rural areas, that most schools are in the rural areas, and that most schools are primary schools, with children ranging in age from 5 to 12 years the likelihood of them experiencing violence is great. It is also important to stress that, apart from explicit violence, threats, intimidation, being forced to listen to hate speech, and being aware that there can be severe consequences for not being part of the “correct” social (political party) group creates an atmosphere of fear and stress that is also inimical to healthy child development.

It is also important to add to this picture the oft-reported attacks on families in their homes, particularly in rural areas. Here it must be remembered that both schools and homes are typically, and necessarily, places of safety for children, and hence the understanding that impairing this nexus can have long-term disabling effects on children. Many reports indicate the extent of such attacks on citizens in their homes, and it is highly probable that these attacks were at the least witnessed by children, frequently led to families becoming severely impoverished as a consequence of houses being burned and goods and livestock stolen, and equally frequently leading to families becoming internally displaced.

The point being made here is that the type of climate created during elections creates insecurity in children, and, since violence can be experienced and witnessed at both home and school, provides no places of safety for them¹⁰. The major question here (which cannot be answered on available evidence) is the extent of the harm that has been caused, but, whatever the extent of the harm; the effects on children can be envisioned with some certainty.

What follows is an attempt to at least quantify the risks using data from the past decade. It will not be possible to provide any estimate of the consequences of these risks for children, but at least specifying the probable risks will allow some estimate of the scale of the needed response for Zimbabwean children.

2. Methodology

Since there is no good data on the effects of electoral violence on children available, we drew on the published reports on political violence in the past decade. The best public source available is the Political Monthly Violence Reports of the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (the “Human Rights Forum”), that published monthly reports from July 2001 until December 2008. This gives a total of 90 reports, which covered over 40,000 violations, which may involve many more people than this, but, since the Human Rights Forum data only reports violations, it is not possible to assess the number of people involved in these violations.

The data used in this analysis has considerable face validity since they are derived from case reports in which the victims giving their stories had these attested through medical and psychological examination (and treatment) and gave statements to lawyers. Thus, the trends have at the least, on more than face value, a basis in valid and reliable information.

All reports were read carefully, and each individual case report was examined in order to determine whether it fitted one of the three categories below. Cases that did not conform to these categories were excluded from the analysis.

The three categories were as follows:

- Violations in which children were directly mentioned as being present or were victims themselves. This turned out to be 103 cases;

¹⁰ For a brief analysis of the possible consequences for education and children’s well-being, see Pswarayi, L, & Reeler, A.P (2102), *‘Fragility’ and education in Zimbabwe: Assessing the impact of violence on education*. December 2012, HARARE: RESEARCHA & ADVOCACY UNIT.

- Violations that took place at schools. These include violations where teachers were the targets (whether or not this took place at school), on the rationale that violations against teachers would be quickly known in the surrounding community (and by children), especially if the teacher subsequently left the area. Also included were violations that took place at schools, on the basis that this too would be known in the surrounding community (and by children). Finally, cases where schools were mentioned as “bases”. Because this too would be known in the surrounding community (and by children). This turned out to be 89 cases;
- Violations that took place at domestic houses, on the basis that these would usually involve the whole family as witnesses, and therefore witnessed by children. This turned out to be 254 cases.

The data was entered on a spread sheet and then each case was carefully examined to draw out the details of each case as binary entries in order that quantification was possible. A variety of descriptors were derived for this analysis, covering the following areas:

- Perpetrator type - police, army, central intelligence organization (CIO), war veteran, youth militia, ZANU PF supporter, MDC supporter, traditional leader, other;
- Violation type – arson, assault, abduction, displacement, intimidation, rape, theft, threat, torture, sexual assault, other;
- Place of violation – home, school, “base”, public place, etc.

The data is described as simple frequencies and percentages.

3. Results

The results are reported by each of the categories as suggested earlier.

3.1. Direct experience of violence by children

There were 103 cases in the Human Rights Forum reports that referred to children having direct experience of the violence, either by having physical harm inflicted upon them, or witnessing direct harm to adults, both in their families or others, or being the victims of violent displacement. This category is distinguished from the third category by there being direct as opposed to implied presence of children.

The age structure (where such information was available) of the children involved in these reports was of great concern for 42 (67%) were under five years old, meaning that a potentially vulnerable and impressionable group was either experiencing or witnessing serious harm.

3.1.1 Violations experienced or witnessed by children

As can be seen from Table 1 (over), 82 separate violations were recorded from these 103 cases, with some very serious violations at high rates amongst them - displacement (39%) being the highest, but assault (17%), detention (15%), and the family being separated from each other (12%) were also reported with moderately high frequency also . However, all the violations are serious and can have adverse effects on the children affected.

Table 1: Violations directly experienced by children – 2001 to 2008

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Totals
Abduction	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	4 (5%)
Assault	2	0	1	1	1	2	4	1	14 (17%)
Detention	0	0	0	0	1	4	5	2	12 (15%)
Displaced	2	4	4	0	1	0	0	21	32 (39%)
Rape	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	3 (4%)
Separated	1	1	8	0	0	0	0	0	10 (12%)
Threatened	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	3	6 (7%)
Tortured	1	0	1	1	1	2	4	3	1 (1%)
Totals:	7	7	15	3	4	6	9	31	82
Percentage:	9%	9%	18%	4%	5%	7%	11%	38%	

Additionally, it can be seen that the highest number of violations is recorded for 2008, which is also the worst election in Zimbabwe’s history, but the second highest rate was recorded in 2003 which was not an election year. 2003 was, however, the year in which the so-called “Final Push” was initiated by the MDC¹¹, and this led to very strong repression by the government.

It is evident, and shown by the case given as illustrative, that children are generally not the primary victims in the violence, but can easily become victims in the violence that is inflicted on their families: this is described in more detail in the section below (section 6.3).

On the day in question, it is alleged that the victim, an MDC member heard people knocking and shouting loudly at his house asking him to come out. Before the victim could answer the, assailants allegedly broke down the door. The victim was reportedly dragged to the assailants’ car (light green Nissan Skyline) and forced inside. The assailants who were visibly drunk and holding bottles of beer claimed to be plain - clothes police officers. The victim tried to run away from the purported police officers but one of them fired three warning shots. The victim identified one of the assailants as a war veteran who is also a member of the St Mary’s Neighbourhood Watch Committee based at St Mary’s Police Station. On the same day, a couple that are members of the MDC and WOZA were assaulted by armed men who claimed to be police officers on the day in question. It is alleged that the men broke down the couple’s door and dragged the husband out where they assaulted him. The assailants then forced the victim into their car but he refused and ran away. The assailants then returned to the house where they kicked and slapped the wife who had been left behind. The same assailants returned to the victims’ house on 14 April and further assaulted the woman after she failed to tell them the whereabouts of her husband. Moreover, the assailants slapped the couple’s three-year-old daughter before they left. The child suffered a laceration on her lip.

Table 2 indicates the frequency with which violations were directly witnessed, as opposed to experienced, by children. The pattern is, unsurprisingly, similar to the pattern seen with direct experiencing: 2008 and 2003 are the worst years, but assault (36%) is the highest category of violation. However, property destruction replaces displacement as the second highest category of violation, but is undoubtedly associated with displacement.

¹¹ This was an initiative headed by the MDC in which citizens were encouraged to undertake mass civil disobedience: it culminated in a five-day stay away that was supposed to end in citizens massing in central Harare.

Table 2: Violations witnessed by children – 2001 to 2008

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Totals
Abduction	4	1	6	2	0	0	1	7	21 (18%)
Assault	1	4	9	4	7	0	1	15	41 (36%)
Murder	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1 (1%)
Property destruction	3	3	7	0	3	0	0	14	30 (26%)
Rape	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	2	4 (3%)
Tortured	2	0	5	2	1	1	4	3	18 (16%)
Total:	10	8	28	8	13	1	6	41	115
Percentage:	9%	7%	24%	7%	11%	1%	5%	36%	

The effects of displacement and property destruction should not be under-estimated for the consequences to children’s mental health: seeing your parents beaten up and the family home destroyed is not trivial for children.

A Bulawayo business woman Rejoice Sibanda-Ncube was evicted from her farm in Nyamandlovu after she refused to provide food for ZANU PF supporters camped at a base adjacent to her farm. The victim and her three children were force-marched out of their home at midnight by a group of war veterans from Redwood Farm and accused of refusing to provide them with food, inviting MDC supporters to the farm and not attending ZANU PF meetings in the area. The war veterans told her never to set foot on the farm as it now belonged to them. The victim returned with her gardener the following Sunday to seek permission from the war veterans to collect some clothes for her and her children but they refused and warned her that if she returned to the farm they would shoot her. The victim reports that the war veterans had already begun looting some of her farming equipment.

The case immediately below shows an even more disturbing event, and it is clear that, while politically motivated rape has been under-reported, even more so has been the under-reporting of such violations to which children have been unwilling witnesses¹².

The female victim reports that she was raped and assaulted by ZANU PF youths. They went to her home at around 23:00hrs and broke into her daughters’ bedroom when she refused to come out. She was forced to reveal herself when they threatened to assault her daughters. They raped her and assaulted her with sticks in the presence of her daughters. She was assaulted for the role of observer she played in the March 29 2008 harmonised elections. She then left for Harare fearing further victimisation.

Together, these findings described in these two tables show a disturbing picture, and demonstrate that children, as all the preceding discussion has indicated, are not immune from the consequences of organised violence.

¹² Similar cases were reported in an investigation of politically motivated rape in 2010. See RAU (2010), *No Hiding Place. Politically Motivated Rape of Women in Zimbabwe*. Report prepared by the Research and Advocacy Unit (RAU) and the Zimbabwe Association of Doctors for Human Rights (ZADHR). December 2010. HARARE: RESEARCH & ADVOCACY UNIT.

3.1.2 Perpetrators of violations against children

The data on the perpetrators shows little difference from that reported in many human rights reports since 2000. It is interesting that, unlike many previous reports, MDC Youth are reported as perpetrators at a very low frequency, but youth militia, ZANU PF supporters, and war veterans are mentioned frequently. However, it is distressing that the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) are mentioned with such a high frequency, although most of these cases relate to the arrest and detention of National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) or WOZA activists, where women were detained in difficult conditions together with their infant children.

Table 3: Perpetrators identified – 2001 to 2008

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Totals
CIO	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MDC youth	0	0	3	0	1	0	0	0	4 (3%)
War veteran	5	2	0	1	1	0	0	3	12 (10%)
Youth militia	0	0	7	1	1	0	0	25	34 (28%)
ZANU PF youth	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2 (2%)
ZANU PF supporter	5	2	1	3	3	0	2	17	33 (27%)
ZNA	1	0	5	0	0	0	0	2	8 (7%)
ZRP	0	0	9	1	5	4	8	3	30 (24%)
Totals:	11	6	25	6	11	4	10	50	123
Percentage:	9%	5%	20%	5%	9%	3%	8%	41%	

However, not all the cases merely involve the ZRP in arrests and detentions as the following disturbing report indicates:

The victim claims that on the day of the incident he went to the shops around 17:00 hrs with his 5 year old child to buy covers and books for his children. He was leaving the shop when 4 police officers surrounded him and started assaulting him and he fell down. His 5 year old child started crying and he tried to get up but the police beat him and he fell again. He got up and ran away and was allegedly assaulted with a baton on his right ankle. His child was caught by the police who were alleged to have poured acid water on him. He ran back and the police also poured acid water on him. The police then assaulted other people in the vicinity.

3.2 Violence at schools or involving teachers

As pointed out earlier, and also in an earlier report, school is a very important part of children's life, providing the first public arena for socialisation outside of the family and the immediate local community. Thus, it is crucial that schools are safe environments, and the reports that schools have been venues for political activity and violence are a matter for grave

concern¹³. Below the findings in relations to schools and political activity and violence are described.

3.2.1 Violations

Table 4 describes the violations that affected the actual running of schools during the period 2001 to 2008. These ranged from temporary closure of schools through to the school premises being used as a “base” for either political activity or violence, or both. As can be seen, the use of schools as “bases” (42%) or being closed (36%) were the most frequently mentioned effects on schools.

Table 4: Effects of political activities on schools – 2001 to 2008

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Totals
Arson	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1 (1%)
Closure	2	6	2	0	0	0	0	16	26 (36%)
Disruption	3	2	3	0	1	0	0	2	11 (15%)
Used as base	4	10	1	1	4	0	0	10	30 (42%)
Property destruction	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	4 (4%)
Total:	10	21	6	1	5	0	0	29	72
Percentage:	14%	29%	8%	1%	7%	0	0	40%	

The effects of such disruption to school life are described in the case below from 2002:

Joel Hita, Tsana Gumva, other teachers and students of Mapanzure Secondary School had the school closed indefinitely after suspected Zanu-PF supporters who accused them of being MDC supporters beat some of the 50 teachers. Four of the teachers were reported as having been seriously injured. The Zanu-PF supporters are alleged to have arrived in a white Nissan truck and to have dragged the teachers out of the classrooms. They assaulted them in full view of the students. This is the second closure of the school following a similar closure in May 2000 in the run up to the Parliamentary elections. This was as a result of clashes between Zanu-PF and MDC after the parents accused the teachers of belonging to MDC.

Table 5 (over) describes the ways in which pupils were affected by the political activity or violence that took place at a school. As can be seen, this ranged from being forced to flee due to the threats to pupils actually being assaulted. The highest category of violation was being forced to attend political rallies (which is, of course, wholly unacceptable), but a similarly high number of families and pupils were forced to flee the area or were forced out of school (33%).

¹³ Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (2002), *Teaching them a lesson. A report on the attack on Zimbabwean teachers*, HARARE: ZIMBABWE HUMAN RIGHTS NGO FORUM.

Table 5: Violations reported at schools – 2001 to 2008

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Totals
Abduction	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2 (13%)
Assault	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2 (13%)
Detained	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Forced to attend rallies	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	6 (40%)
Dismissed or forced to flee from School	2	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	5 (33%)
Total:	6	3	3	0	0	0	0	3	15
Percentage:	40%	20%	20%	0	0	0	0	20%	

The case below, from 2001, illustrates how pupils were affected, leading to both displacement and then assault.

After political violence in Manbenga, B.J., aged 15, and his family moved to Bindura. On 22 October he returned to Waerera School for exams. On that day two Zanu (PF) youths came and assaulted him, demanding to know where his father was. They removed him and his sister from school and threatened to make her their 'wife'. They both escaped later. As a result of the assault, he has a perforated left eardrum and impaired hearing which could lead to permanent damage.

One of the most serious aspects of the attacks on education has been the use of schools as places of political activity, and especially their use as “bases” where extreme violence was meted out to opposition members, and even those merely suspected of being opposition supporters.

The female victim reports that she was assaulted and had her home destroyed by ZANU PF youths on 18 May 2008. The youths set the home in which she and her children were sleeping on fire. They managed to get out of the home unharmed. On 19 May 2008 the ZANU PF youths returned to her home and took her to their base at Katerera Primary School where she was assaulted with an axe handle. Her second hut was also set on fire during this attack. Her husband had fled to Harare after he had been threatened by the youths.

One of the frequent effects of the political activity and violence that affected schools was the focus on teachers themselves, as has been described in previous reports¹⁴.

¹⁴ See again Pswarayi, L, & Reeler, A.P (2102), 'Fragility' and education in Zimbabwe: Assessing the impact of violence on education. December 2012, HARARE: RESEARCHA & ADVOCACY UNIT; PTUZ (2012), *Every School has a Story. A Preliminary Report on Teachers Experiences of Elections in Zimbabwe*. Report produced by PTUZ and RAU. February 2012. HARARE: PROGRESSIVE TEACHERS UNION OF ZIMBABWE and RESEARCH & ADVOCACY UNIT; PTUZ (2012), *Political Violence and Intimidation of Zimbabwean Teachers*. May 2012. Report prepared for the Progressive Teachers Union of

Table 6: Violations against teachers – 2001 to 2008

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Totals
Abduction	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	8 (6%)
Assault	6	14	4	0	1	0	0	8	33 (26%)
Family involved	1	2	1	0	1	0	0	1	6 (5%)
Forced to flee	10	7	0	0	2	0	0	2	21 (17%)
Forced to attend rallies	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	7 (6%)
Forced denunciation	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3 (2%)
Ordered to remove or dismissed	4	4	0	0	1	0	0	1	10 (8%)
Property destruction	2	6	1	0	0	0	0	5	14 (11%)
Murdered	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	3 (2%)
Threatened	9	9	1	0	2	0	0	0	21 (17%)
Total:	42	46	8	0	7	0	0	23	126
Percentage:	33%	37%	6%	0	6%	0	0	18%	

As the reports on teachers detailed, teachers were seen as *prima facie* supporters of parties in opposition to ZANU PF, more especially because the independent trade union representing many teachers, the Progressive Teachers' Union of Zimbabwe (PTUZ), had frequently been in conflict with the government. Furthermore, teachers were usually involved as polling officers in elections, and hence their loyalty (or usually, their independence) became a major issue in elections. Finally, being the more educated members of local communities, their opinions could be very influential in any election. Teachers thus became targets, as is clearly illustrated in Table 6, with 2008 once again the worst year for violations. The consequences for some teachers were not trivial:

Simba Chikova, a high school teacher at Zaka Secondary School in Zaka was allegedly beaten to death by ZANU PF supporters. He was taken from his home on the school premises and attacked on accusations of being an MDC supporter. He was taken to a ZANU PF torture camp where he was assaulted with logs until he passed away. His body was later found dumped outside the school premises.

In other cases the violence targeted teachers, but also had serious consequences for the pupils and the entire surrounding community:

The headmaster and four other teachers at Chitsanga Primary School in Bikita were beaten by a group of Zanu PF youths for chanting MDC slogans in class. They later ransacked their houses; the school was closed on 17 January 2002 as all the teachers had fled.

3.2.2 Perpetrators

Once again the perpetrators described in the Human Rights Forum reports are little different in respect of violations against schools, pupils, and teachers than those reported for other groups or communities.

Zimbabwe [PTUZ] by the Research and Advocacy Unit [RAU]. HARARE: PROGRESSIVE TEACHERS UNION OF ZIMBABWE.

Table 7: Perpetrators of political violence in schools – 2001 to 2008

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Totals
CIO	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2 (2%)
MDC youth	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
War veteran	13	8	1	0	0	0	0	2	24 (25%)
Youth militia	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	2	7 (7%)
ZANU PF youth	7	10	1	1	3	0	0	12	34 (35%)
ZANU PF supporter	8	8	1	0	1	0	0	2	20 (21%)
ZNA	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	3 (3%)
ZRP	1	1	2	0	1	0	0	1	6 (6%)
Total:	31	32	6	1	5	0	0	21	96
Percentage:	32%	33%	6%	1%	5%	0	0	22%	

Interestingly, 2000, 2002, and 2008 were the most serious years for schools where perpetrators could be identified, suggesting, as these were all election years, a very specific focus on schools, pupils, teachers, and obviously the community surrounding the school. ZANU PF Youth, ZANU PF supporters, and war veterans are the most frequently mentioned perpetrators.

As this case below (from 2008) illustrates, ZANU PF Youth, who are the most commonly identified perpetrators in the Human Rights Forum data, have been a significant source of the problems afflicting school, and particularly during the elections in 2000, 2002, and 2008:

ZANU-PF youths from Mahusekwa reportedly besieged 2 schools in Chibota, Marondera District, and chased away 9 teachers, accusing them of backing the MDC. Eight of the 9 teachers who fled said they would not return to the schools alleging that their lives were in danger. Mashonaland East Provincial Education Director in the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture is said to have confirmed that 7 of the teachers have since been redeployed to schools in Murehwa, Seke and Marondera.

3.3 Violence at families' homes

This category was included, as was indicated earlier, because of the presumption that any attack on a family at home, even though primarily aimed at the adults, would most probably involve children as witnesses of violence. As pointed out in Section 6, the cases in this category are distinguished from the cases where children are directly identified in the violation.

3.3.1 Violations

Violations taking place at family homes showed the highest frequency of the three categories, with 254 cases being identified from the Human Rights Forum reports. As can be seen from Table 8 (over), these were most frequent in 2008, but were also more frequent in 2000, 2002, and 2003 in comparison with other years, and three of these years were election years. The most common violations were the witnessing of violence (29%), followed by displacement (27%).

Table 8: Violations taking place at homes – 2001 to 2008

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Totals
Abduction	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	5	9 (2%)
Assault	7	9	16	4	0	0	1	24	61 (15%)
Displacement	23	24	22	7	5	0	0	31	112 (27%)
Murdered	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	4 (1%)
Threatened	5	6	3	5	1	0	1	34	55 (13%)
Torture	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	13 (3%)
Separation	7	7	12	2	1	0	0	14	43 (10%)
Witnessed	31	39	16	6	1	1	0	27	121 (29%)
Total:	75	88	70	24	8	1	2	150	418
Percentage:	18	21	17	6	2	0	0	36	

There is a consistency to many of these reports, as illustrated by the case below, with parents being assaulted (sometimes tortured) in front of children, the family home being destroyed (usually by arson), goods and livestock stolen, and the family being displaced (frequently ending up internally displaced).

The male victim reports that he was assaulted and had his home set on fire by ZANU PF youths who came to his home at night and forced him and his family out of the home before setting it on fire. They then assaulted the victim, his wife and young children with sticks, booted feet and open hands. They also took the victim's livestock.

It takes little imagination to understand the terror caused to young children from such a frightening experience, nor the adversity that followed being internally displaced.

3.3.2 Perpetrators

The most frequently identified perpetrators were similar to those mentioned above and in other human rights reports – ZANU PF supporters (31%), ZANU PF Youth (24%), and war veterans (18%).

Table 9: Perpetrators of violence at homes – 2001 to 2008

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Totals
CIO	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	3 (3%)
MDC youth	0	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	5 (5%)
Traditional leader	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1 (1%)
War veteran	29	8	2	0	0	0	0	8	47 (18%)
Youth militia	11	5	1	1	1	0	0	3	22 (8%)
ZANU PF youth	3	12	14	6	1	0	0	28	64 (24%)
ZANU PF supporter	20	25	20	5	1	0	0	11	82 (31%)
ZNA	0	0	20	1	0	0	0	1	22 (8%)
ZRP	3	3	8	2	4	0	0	0	20 (8%)
Total:	66	55	69	15	7	1	1	52	266
Percentage:	25%	21%	26%	6%	3%	0%	0%	20%	

These three main groups of perpetrators frequently worked in concert according to the reports, as illustrated by the following case from 2008.

The female victim, the wife of an MDC activist, reports that her home was set on fire by ZANU PF youths who were looking for her husband. When she informed them that he was not at home, they then ordered her to take all her furniture out of the home and they set the home and food store on fire. They ordered the victim to leave the village. She then fled to Harare with her children.

4. Conclusions

It is worth commenting at the outset that these bald statistics cannot hope to convey the full extent of the trauma suffered by the children involved, but the very brief illustrative cases do give an impression. 446 individual reports do, however, give a reasonable sample to examine trends in relation to children, and the three categories show great similarities in both the kinds of violations inflicted on children and the perpetrators involved.

It seems evident from the data examined that very young children, many under 5 years and, certainly given the large number of primary schools, young children anyhow, were witnessing serious violence, and mostly to their caretaking adults. They are not immune from direct violence and 17% of the sample was reported to have been assaulted: this is a very serious finding and clearly this needs far more attention than has been evident from the reporting to date.

The data relating to the witnessing of human rights violations indicated that there was a much greater risk of children witnessing violence and experiencing very traumatic events such as having their homes destroyed, becoming seriously impoverished through the theft or destruction of the family's possessions, and then being displaced from their community, probably ending up as internally displaced. It is not clear from these reports whether such displacement has been permanent or whether families were able to return to their communities, but even such a temporary traumatic displacement can cause emotional distress and possible psychological impairment.

Similarly, the disruption to schooling, the attacks on teachers (and their frequent displacement), and, worst of all, the use of schools for political activities and even as places where violence and intimidation occur, can have profoundly negative consequences for children. It was noted that children were frequently forced to attend political rallies – this was reported in 40% of the cases (see Table 5) – where it can be made manifestly plain to children the risks involved in political activity, never mind the more odious implication that children are being politically indoctrinated. It was also plain from these cases that teachers become viewed as untrustworthy persons in the community, and can be publicly humiliated and physically attacked, which hardly creates the kind of climate in schools necessary for safe learning. And when teachers are driven out of the community for the kinds of views they are purportedly holding, it is unlikely that this is unknown to the community at large or the children in the school. On this data, schools are not the places of safety that children need.

It is also clear from the Human Rights Forum cases that homes too are not necessarily places of safety, and a very large percentage of the 446 cases – 254 to be precise – were reports of attacks on families' homes, resulting, as was evident from the smaller sample of 89 cases, in violence, property destruction and theft, and eventual displacement. The terror that such events would cause in young children can only be guessed at. Such attacks on family homes would hardly pass unnoticed in a community, providing a terrifying example to other young children of what might happen to them, a situation that might easily be similar to living in zones of high war zone stress.

As we commented in the earlier report¹⁵:

A home in which a child's parents do not overtly conform to the public demand for unqualified allegiance to one political party, or even worse has parents that actively support the other political party, will not be a place of safety. This is reinforced at school where teachers, in much the same position as the child's parents, can be attacked, where public statements can be made denigrating, explicitly and by implication, a child's parents or teacher. This can be further reinforced by the conversations between children themselves, and create a sense of being an outsider and having to be careful about what one says for risk to oneself or one's parents.

It was argued in the background to this investigation that the welcome focus on armed conflict for its effects on children and education might not cover all the situations in which children might be exposed to violence, and that insufficient attention has been paid to elections as sources of extreme public violence and threat. It is clear, as was pointed out, that many countries in Africa experience violent elections, and Zimbabwe is amongst these. As was seen from this analysis of the Human Rights Forum cases, all the violations experienced by children increase markedly during elections, and, as has just been described, these are not trivial, and occur both at home and at school.

An immediate priority here must be for the government to create schools as Zones of Peace, and here to implement fully the recommendations of the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (see Appendix 1). Whilst it may be difficult in the polarised political climate that is Zimbabwe today for government to protect all citizens in their homes, and certainly many of the perpetrators come from non-state groups over which the government may not have actual power, but the government does have responsibility and control over education and schools. It

¹⁵ See again Pswarayi, L, & Reeler, A.P (2102), *'Fragility' and education in Zimbabwe: Assessing the impact of violence on education*. December 2012, HARARE: RESEARCHA & ADVOCACY UNIT.

therefore does not seem very difficult for government to insist upon schools being protected from adverse political activity and political violence: it merely requires the will and the use of its considerable power and resources. Zimbabwe is not in a state of war, there is no armed conflict, and elections can occur without schools being involved.

This data does not permit any analysis of the actual harm, physical and psychological, that these child victims might have suffered, nor can this data give any understanding of the magnitude of the problem. It can be inferred from the very brief review of the international literature that the consequences to children are not likely to be any less serious than those to adults, and, if the trends seen from this examination of the reported cases are actually very extensive, then Zimbabwe is facing a rehabilitation problem of considerable magnitude.

The understanding from other countries, and the studies conducted in these countries (see Section 4 above), is that living in an environment where Potentially Traumatic Events (PTEs) are common can have disabling effects on children, and it seems clear from this data that children are not merely living in an environment where there are PTEs, but are actually experiencing traumatic events. It seems crucial that urgent steps are taken to prevent any future occurrences – both at homes and in schools – in order that the existing burden is not added to.

Furthermore, it must be a priority to understand the existing morbidity amongst children so that appropriate help can be given to the current victims, and this will require a comprehensive, national epidemiological investigation. Zimbabwe urgently needs both a preventative and a rehabilitative strategy for its children.

Appendix 1

The Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack [GCPEA]

GCPEA has developed the following goals and recommendations to aid our expanding network of united organizations in our main objectives: monitoring and reporting violations; enforcing programmatic measures for prevention and protection, and restriction of military use and occupation of schools.

Goals

1. To highlight the incidence and impact of attacks on education in conflict-affected and fragile situations among key actors, and cultivate public support for education in safe and secure environments.
2. To promote the strengthening of existing monitoring and reporting systems as well as the creation of new systems where needed.
3. To promote effective, coherent, timely, and evidence-based programmatic measures, including prevention and response.
4. To encourage adherence to existing international law protecting education and the strengthening of international norms and standards as needed.
5. To fight impunity for attacks on education by promoting and supporting a range of accountability measures.

Recommendations

1. Incidents and Impact of Attacks On Education

- The international community, states, non-state groups, and other actors should acknowledge that conflict limits educational opportunities for millions of students worldwide, and that attacks on education are a common tactic in conflict that requires a concerted response at both the country and international levels. When educators, students, and education institutions are attacked and education institutions are used for military purposes, the damage to societies as well as individuals is severe and long-lasting.

2. Monitoring and Reporting

- States, local organizations, and relevant international agencies should rigorously monitor attacks against education and use that information to devise effective, coordinated responses, including preventive interventions, rapid response, and both legal and non-legal accountability measures for perpetrators.
- UN human rights monitoring mechanisms, including the Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights; the Human Rights Committee; the Committee on the Rights of the Child, and the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms, including the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, should give greater attention to monitoring and reporting on attacks on education.
- Country task forces of the UN-led Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) on grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict should enhance the monitoring and reporting of attacks on schools, students, teachers and other persons related to the school (protected persons); threats

of attacks against protected persons; and actions by parties to the conflict which impede children's access to education, including the military use of schools, as requested by the Security Council in Resolution 1998 of July 2011.

3. Programmatic Measures

- Relevant ministries and education actors in countries where attacks on education occur should establish preventive measures, such as early warning systems, and a rapid response system for attacks. International organizations should offer support for these efforts.
- Education service providers and education policy practitioners should be encouraged to develop best practices in protecting education from attack.
- States and other relevant actors should ensure that educators and their families whom attacks force to flee are offered protection, that the impact on education systems of their departure is addressed, and that, when possible, they are able to return.

4. Adherence To and Strengthening of International Law

- All parties to an armed conflict should abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law and not commit attacks against education. Redress should be provided where violations have occurred.
- Government officials and leaders of non-state armed groups should take all necessary steps to prevent attacks on education, including making clear public statements that attacks on education are prohibited, issuing clear military orders to this effect, and refraining from using education institutions for military purposes.
- States should ensure that their domestic law criminalizes all elements of attacks on education in line with international humanitarian and human rights law, and institute policies, formalized in military and law enforcement manuals, training, and rules of engagement, that prohibit or at least minimize the use of education buildings and sites for military or law enforcement purposes. Similarly, UN and regional peacekeepers should ensure that their rules of engagement in military manuals include such prohibitions.
- All parties to peace agreements and mediators should ensure that issues concerning the right to education be included in any post-conflict agreement, and that international legal protections for education are explicitly articulated.

5. Accountability

- States should systematically investigate and prosecute in accordance with international standards those individuals responsible for ordering, taking part in, or bearing command responsibility for the range of violations of international human rights, humanitarian, and criminal law that constitute attacks on education.
- Tribunals at the domestic, regional, and international levels should give specific consideration to violations that constitute attacks against education during relevant investigations and pursue and prosecute cases of sufficient gravity over which they have jurisdiction.
- Informal and transitional justice mechanisms, such as commissions of inquiry and truth and reconciliation commissions, should, where relevant, specifically recognize and concretely address attacks on education.