

THE PEACE CONNECTOR

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Peace cannot be kept by force; it can only be achieved by understanding.
 Albert Einstein

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S DESK

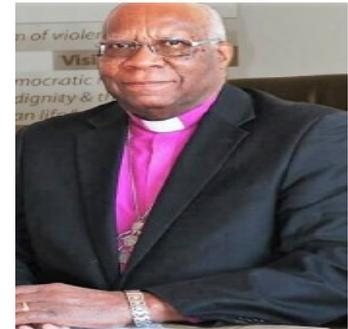
Greetings to you all in 2019. It is a bit late for us at ECLF to say compliments of the new year as we are already more than thirty days into 2019. For us as a Forum, and for many Zimbabweans, the year has started on what we may term a rather hectic note. Many of our countrymen have literally had to "hit the ground running" as images of the running skirmishes between civilians, the police and military in the last few weeks are anything to go by.

Traditionally, the first few days or weeks of the year are reserved as a time of reflection, and planning but for us as a Forum and for the multitude of peace builders in our nation the time for a business as usual attitude does not exist. We have watched our country go up in flames, people's lives ruthlessly taken and the generally peace loving people of Zimbabwe rear up and revolt; in the process destroying infrastructure that will take years to rebuild considering the fragile state

of our economy.

We are deeply saddened to see our country once more regress back to what we see as a historical culture of violence and lack of respect for the sanctity of life. This is even more heart breaking especially when we reflect on the unresolved hurt and pain that most of our countrymen are still living with, almost forty years post the war of liberation and other tragic event since.

But in spite of this, we remain positive and say Ebenezer. The Lord has brought us thus far and the work He has called us for is not yet done. Although the harvest may be plenty and the laborers few, we will continue to persevere and share the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ with all. As we forge forward to face the challenges of this year, insurmountable as they may seem, we ask that you continue to stand with us in prayer. We value your support immensely and it is from you



Bishop EM Dr. A. Moyo

standing with us in solidarity that we draw the strength to keep reaching out to those in need and making all efforts within our power to share the gospel of peace. We look forward to facing another year ahead with you at

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

"When we allow violence against some, we enable violence against all".

DaShanne Stokes

The events of the last week (January 14-16) which seemingly emerged from nowhere have left us as a nation with pain and a bleeding heart. What was expected to be a peaceful protest and #Shutdown following the shocking increase and announcement of fuel prices by the President of our nation, the already unbearable increase of prices of basic commodities, the demand to pay for services in hard currency which ordinary citizens do not earn or have and the low wages and salaries that hardly compare to the cost of living stole the peace in households. The anger and frustration of the ordinary person in the street was only hidden to those who chose to close their eyes and ears to the plight of the poor. The explosion of anger resulted in looting and destruction of property as well as lives. Not only that, many people have been subjected to various kinds of assaults, maimed, raped, traumatized, arbitrary arrest and some

imprisoned. The nature of violence directed primarily to the government by the citizenry and the government to the civilian population in several of our major cities has left all of us heart broken. As ECLF this has left us with a bitter taste in our mouths.

ECLF as the peace building arm of the church and since its founding in 2008 has primarily focused on rural communities. Some of these communities have been epicenters of politically motivated violence especially during election periods. ECLF can authoritatively claim that violence of all kinds has been reduced in areas where we have been operating. We have every reason to rejoice when we see communities that were once at each others' throats working together to develop their communities. However in the city where we are headquartered, Bulawayo, and behind our back, within a week, the violence that occurred and the destruction of property witnessed resembles only that of a war zone. Our young people between the ages of twelve and thirty (12-30) seem to have been the frontline foot soldiers of the violence.

This can only be a wakeup call for us as ECLF.

It is time to focus on our urban communities. The writing was already on the wall; during the last national elections whose results are still being contested much of the violence was in the urban centres.



As ECLF we cannot ignore the writing on the wall. It is incumbent upon us to begin to mobilize resources to reach all sectors of our urban communities while it is still day. Our competent and committed staff is surely ready for the task. Let us all be in prayer for our nation. At the same time let us rise to the occasion and do all we can to prevent any possible future occurrences of this nature happening again. The lesson has been learned. Violence of any kind directed to any group of

WHERE TO IN 2019?



Rev. Sikhalo Cele is the Programmes and Training Manager and a seasoned practitioner in conflict analysis, mediation and dialogue.

The year 2018 created hopes for some, if not most, Zimbabweans. The elections held on the 31 July 2018 were largely peaceful only to be marred by the violence of the 1st August 2018 which resulted in several deaths of unarmed civilians and the resulting appointment of an International Commission of Inquiry into the matter. It is still yet to be seen whether the recommendations of this Commission will be acted on by the responsible parties. But if the events of early January are anything to go by, this is unlikely as we again witnessed the heavy hand in the response of the military to what was supposed to be a peaceful protest.

As we started 2019, the strike cum protest or stay away which turned violent reversed all hope of a change in our country's fortunes and left some Zimbabweans terrified, afraid of their fellow community members and also of the security agents. Some people have come to fear the state and find themselves vulnerable since the security sector has ceased to guarantee their security. But has instead become a huge threat

Against this backdrop, ECLF is faced with the daunting challenge of building the nation by building peace in Zimbabwe. The strategic focus for 2019 will be to strengthen dialogue between and

among various stakeholders on community peace building, socio-political and economic issues. Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution and Transformation (CPMRT) capacity building will continue along with strengthening the capacity of the Local Peace Committees (LPCs) towards mediation and facilitating dialogues at community level.

One of the critical areas of focus will be to work closely with the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC) in ensuring the National Peace and Reconciliation Agenda is addressed, in addition to the various programmes such as peace education in schools, strengthening active citizen participation, and integrating the role women and youth in peace building.



IS THIS THE ZIMBABWE WE WANT?

Over the last few days we have been inundated with images of pillaging, looting and violence across the country. In as much as the economic situation remains challenging, with the recent fuel prices increases spurring a corresponding rise in the overall cost of living, under no circumstances is violence acceptable as a means of airing grievances.

Internationally, Zimbabweans have always been known and respected for being a God-fearing, hardworking and peace

-loving people.

The events of the past week are in total contrast of this image. Do we really want to be known as a people who resort to the destruction of all that we have worked for, a people who resort to burning and looting in order to draw attention to our disgruntlement, a people who condone the use of lethal violence in the face of dissenting views and a people who resort to gagging and silencing those who would want to speak their piece?



Is this the Zimbabwe we want? Is the narrative we want documented? Let us not ignore the voices crying out for re-dress, let us not beat people into silence and submission but rather find ways of engaging peacefully to address the impasse.

DIALOGUE: A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION?



President of Zimbabwe
@edmnangagwa

I invite leaders of all political parties as well as religious and civil leaders to set aside our differences and come together. What unites us is stronger than what could ever divide us. Let's begin a national dialogue. Let's put the economy first. Let's put the people first 4/4

The Head of State has called for national dialogue to help forge a consensus vision of the Zimbabwe we want.

In response to the tragic events of the last week the Head of State, President Mnangagwa has made calls for a national dialogue bringing together diverse stakeholders. As a Forum which firmly believes in peace and the resolution of conflict through processes such as dialogue and mediation, we are certain that this is the first critical step towards restoring Zimbabwe to the jewel it once was. We are also glad that the President's call for dialogue has been embraced by many influential and critical

stakeholders within the business fraternity, political sphere and of course the church. However before such a dialogue can be convened several key questions must be answered and issues addressed:

* Who has the clout and credibility to lead a dialogue of this magnitude?

* Who can help bring impartial, credible facilitators to the process? Who will broker the process to set the principles and terms of reference for the

dialogue, ensure that they are agreed on and abided to by all parties to the process?

* How can we ensure that the dialogue is indeed a national one, with the interests of the ordinary man on the street at heart, and not just pushing the interests of a n entitled few?

* How can we develop a shared vision or convergence on the Zimbabwe we want and deviate from the divisions plaguing our society?

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

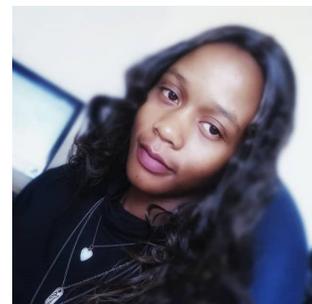
JUST A SINGLE QUESTION

I would like to share with you a strategy that I believe we as peace builders need to adopt in our journey during 2019 and as far as the sustainable peace and development pilgrimage is concerned.

How often do you practice effective communication? By this I mean, how often do you take the time to ask your fellow neighbour, a stranger or even your enemy questions to which you genuinely want to hear the response? How often do you take the time to take a close look into their eyes, faces during the course of your conversation? If only you took the time to fully

engage yourself in conversation you would get answers the hidden questions you have been keeping and continuously asking yourself probably without answers or knowledge for. That one question you take time to construct may lead you to the reality of our communities, nation and international situation. If it were possible to present this in a play or dramatic manner, surely it would be a shock to many, finding out that almost every living soul in Zimbabwe is bleeding and suffering in some way. This is visible in the way which most Zimbabweans connect their stories from a simple

and basic question: "How are you, Makadii, linjani". Just that simple question has the power to elicit an outpouring of stories and experiences without being asked for more explanation. From that basic question, I people involuntarily share their stories. If 2019 is a new year for all of us, let us do new things. Let us journey on a new path, let have new eyes and ears to see beyond the words people speak and rather listen through the heart. When you see physical wounds, you are in the general path but when you begin to feel the pain of the unseen wounds, you are real, you are in the new path, you are real



Lindiwe Maseko is one of ECLF's youth facilitators and is currently handling issues of mainstreaming youth perspectives into our peace building work.

BEYOND 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GBV



**BECAUSE I AM A MAN
I CONDEMN CHILD MARRIAGES**

Oliver Mtshudzi
Musician



GBV is a sad reality that many men and women around Zimbabwe and the world over are faced with on a daily basis. In as much as the 16 days of activism in December raise awareness on the realities of GBV, what is being done during the other 349 days of the year?

Another unfortunate dimension to GBV is that it has predominantly been seen as an issue affecting women and girls. What we neglect to take into cogni-

zance is the fact that the term gender is a socially constructed definition of both men and women and hence it focuses on both sexes and not women in isolation.

According to the UNFPA one in three women aged 15 to 49 in Zimbabwe have experienced physical violence and about one in four women have experienced sexual violence since the age of 15 (<https://zimbabwe.unfpa.org/en/topics/gender-based-violence-0>). Furthermore, according to UN-WOMEN Zimbabwe has a Gender Inequality Index rank of 126 (e.v.a.w.-g.l.o.a.l.-d.a.t.a.b.a.s.e.u.n.w.o.m.e.n.o.r.g/en/countries/africa/zimbabwe). It is therefore evident that gender inequality remains one of the major drivers and contributors to the high prevalence of GBV

and a major barrier to human development.

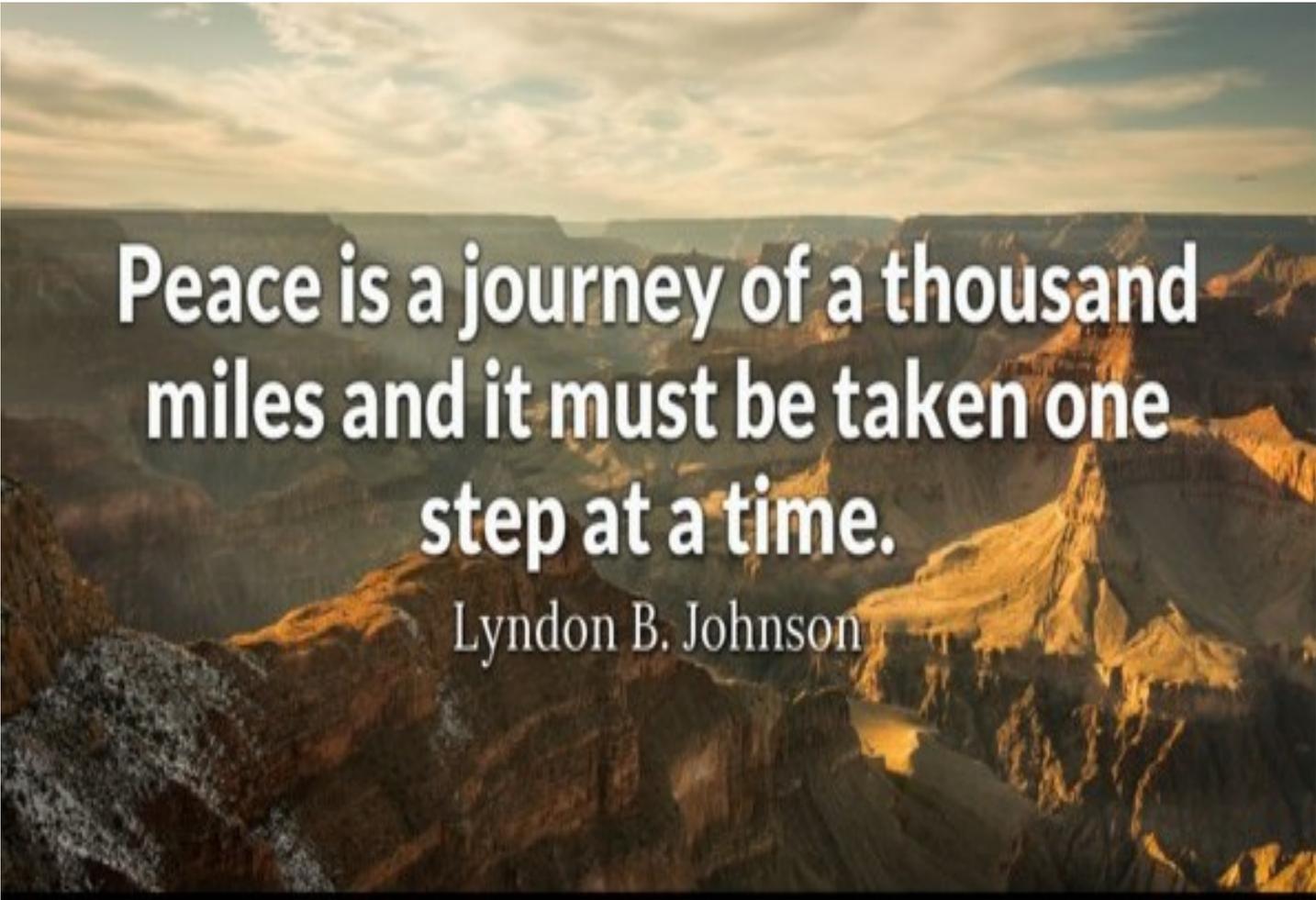
Although women and girls are the most affected, efforts to reduce and eliminate GBV must be targeted at both men and women. In December 2018, ECLF in partnership with ACT Alliance and the Swedish Embassy also took the opportunity to launch the #BecauselamaMan campaign.

At its launch sixteen Zimbabwean men took a clear stance against GBV. Drawn from across the broad spectrum of society, what was common to them is that they provide important and refreshing perspectives on masculinity and what it means to be a man in today's Zimbabwe.

In 2019, ECLF seeks to push this campaign further and enlist the support of at least 349 more men to speak against GBV. We hope this initiative will inspire more men and women to consider and address potentially negative and harmful behaviour in their immediate family, workplace or social circles. There is always something YOU can do to end GBV.

What are the types of GBV?

- Sexual, psychological and physical abuse
- Rape
- Early marriage
- Domestic violence
- Forced trafficking
- Denial of resources, opportunities or services



Peace is a journey of a thousand
miles and it must be taken one
step at a time.

Lyndon B. Johnson

STORY TELLING - HOW TO GET PEOPLE MORE ENGAGED

Stories are powerful tools that define human development, culture and traditions. They have the ability to engage, motivate and inculcate positive attitude in people. Over the years, storytelling has transformed considerably and has evolved as an important tool in content based marketing. However, peace builders are not always sure about how to include storytelling in their work. As peace builders, we are not script writers, authors or a content development company that we need to write stories. To a certain extent, we are right, because as peace builders our primary work is to help people and not to write stories. But wouldn't it be of value to share and publish our success stories, so that we can better display the success of

our work? Shouldn't it be our aim to connect more people to our cause? We therefore think that stories should be part of our work. "A story can be simply understood as the narration of a true or fictional event in a way that the audience learns and experiences the emotions of the main character of the story. Storytelling is the process of sharing stories to provide entertainment, create awareness, preserve culture and transfer information. Storytelling often entails improvisation of the original content to make it more appealing and engaging to the listener.

Storytelling can be a powerful communication tool in fundraising as it creates awareness and instills



“**STORYTELLING IS THE MOST POWERFUL WAY TO PUT IDEAS INTO THE WORLD**”

Robert McKee

emotions in people, which ultimately leads to enhanced donations and funding opportunities. Storytelling is gaining wide popularity amongst various sectors, including donor funding agencies. So please help us share your stories, let your voices be heard and let more people identify with our cause for peace.

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