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DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

Women and the Armed Struggle in Chipinge West constituency, 1974-9.

BY

CHINYOKA VOTE

REG NUMBER R115045Z

Being a dissertation submitted in partial fulfillments for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in History Honors in the department of History in the Faculty of Arts.



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DEDICATIONS

I dedicate this study to my beloved mother, Marinda Chinyoka, and brother Isaac Chinyoka. Also to my beloved wife Learnia Mwakaitechi, my children Passion and Lorna and, the entire Chinyoka family who made it possible for me to complete the study through their encouragement and unwavering support.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

DA	District Assistants
LWF	Liberation War Fighter(s).
RF	Rhodesian Front
RNM	Resistance National Mozambique.
UDI	Unilateral Declaration of Independence.
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front.
ZANLA	Zimbabwean African National Liberation Army.
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People’s Union.
ZIPRA	Zimbabwe People’s Revolutionary Army.

ABSTRACT

The main objective of the study is to explore the response of women to the Armed Struggle in Chipinge West constituency between 1974-9. The study illustrates the experiences of women in the pre-colonial traditional society prior to the armed struggle and how this was extended to the role of women in the armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency. The role of women at family level in Ndau traditional society in Chipinge played a crucial contribution to support and to sustain the liberation war effort at societal level. The study has demonstrated that the relationship between the freedom fighters and rural masses was that of co-existence. The liberation war fighters taught the masses about the agenda of the armed struggle. The Second Chimurenga propaganda was employed by the freedom fighters in order to identify themselves with the masses and to gain support from the rural public. Very little has so far been said by scholars and writers about the daunting task performed by women in the armed struggle. Women remained the most suffering group. The compelling roles played by women in the armed struggle such as motherhood, providing for freedom fighters and logistics to protect and support the liberation war was the major cause for women to experience the atrocities of the armed struggle. The study revealed that women were occasionally victimised by RENAMO and Chimwenje rebel groups. The respondents of this study testified that the liberation war fighters neither victimised nor abused women in any way as women were both their shield and lifeline. They were trained to socialise so they were, disciplined and principled. However, the ceasefire period of 1979 witnessed further and increased victimisation of women in Chipinge West constituency. This was like that because the young and newly recruited cadres were untrained and undisciplined as compared to their counterparts who entered in the country earlier. The untrained and undisciplined liberation war fighters sometimes violated the principles of the war of liberation. Overall the armed struggle has had negative effects on women. Women were affected by the armed struggle in all forms of abuse. With the emergency of the armed struggle, women also became the major victims of rape, beatings and sexual harassment. They were abused by the guards in the Protected Villages. The situation in the constructed government Protected Villages were traumatic, and harmful to health of women and children. The armed struggle distabilised livelihoods activities which households survived on prior to the war period such as agriculture. Thus women were affected politically, culturally and socially by the armed struggle.

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0.1 Introduction

This study mainly focuses on an investigation on the impact of the armed struggle on women in Chipinge West constituency between 1974-79. The armed struggle caused political instability due to freedom fighters' operation, socio-cultural destabilisation, disruption of livelihood activities such as crop cultivation, herding cattle, gathering firewood, amongst others. Women played an important role during the armed struggle for the liberation of Zimbabwe from the exploitative colonial regime. Their participation during the war of liberation involved offering protection through surveillance, moral support, preparing and providing food for the freedom fighters and, sometimes, transporting military equipment and ammunition from Mozambique training bases to the Zimbabwe's war operational zones. Many researchers did not seem to have appreciated the role of women in Chipinge West constituency during the war as this study intends to reveal. This is because most of the researches carried out so far do not highlight the plight of female war collaborators and elderly peasant women in communities. Yet these are the most vulnerable and susceptible groups who were exposed to all forms of operational assaults. For example, during most battle encounters with the Rhodesian forces, women were often the casualties as they would often be as close as possible to the freedom fighters.

Many historians have neglected the plight of women affected by the armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency. The history has been written without portraying the pain of women in the war of liberation period in Chipinge West constituency. This resulted on the plight of women during the war of liberation period in Chipinge West constituency remained secret and untouched. The study intends to elaborate the plight of women during the armed struggle of 1974-79 in Chipinge West constituency. History has been written without showing how the Rhodesian Security Forces, ZIPRA and ZANLA commanders, men fighters, District Administrators and rebels

persecuted women during the war period. The condition of women whom affected by the armed struggle had largely escaped the minds of various historians yet they suffered on both ends. The study seeks to indicate that there was rampant suffering of women during the armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency but have remained a hidden.

Since the 1970s there were many publications and researches undertaken on the impact of the armed struggle on women in Zimbabwe, in general. But it has to be noted that the traditional historians have, until today, not unraveled the effects of the armed struggle on women in Chipinge West constituency in particular. The previous researchers on the same study area in general did not address socio-cultural, economic and political inequalities exacerbated by women's participation in the armed struggle. For example, many female war collaborators could not continue with their education as a result of war engagements. And until today many are struggling to earn a living as a result of such deprivation. Worse still many such women could not marry even after the war as they were either stigmatized (for having been sexually abused) or overgrown for any man's appreciation. On the other hand many families sacrificed a lot of their limited assets like goats and chickens (and even cattle) in support of the armed struggle as these served as some form of food (relish) for the freedom fighters. However, the losses of such assets have a great impact on women who have the responsibility to provide for the family as a feminine role. This was particularly so because when the war broke out many men deserted their homes for urban areas as they were targeted by both warring parties either to join the struggle or collaborate with militias. All these hardships that still affect women of Chipinge West constituency have received little or no attention from traditional historians and this is the premise of the intended study.

The literature on this study reveals that many accounts have been given by many scholars and authorities about how the armed struggle impacted on women socially, politically, economically, culturally and religiously, particularly in other parts of this country but there is no study on a similar topic which this study attempts to address.

0.2. Statement of the problem

This study seeks to uncover the multitude of problems which women fighters, collaborators and peasants went through during the armed struggle. The war basically influenced the destruction of the social fabric of Chipinge West constituency as it led to erosion of moral values such as respect for elders, and decadence of cultural values such as prostitution which became an eyesore to the community. The armed struggle severely disturbed the socio-economic order of the community as it interfered with livelihood activities like crop cultivation, loss of livestock, loss of manpower through death, migration, family disintegration; which all amounted to persistent poverty which has continued to haunt people until today. As if this was not enough, by virtue of its nature, the war caused a high rate of indiscriminate loss of lives. People of all ages, influence, status, amongst others, perished in the war. It plunged misery into the community. Homes were destroyed through warfare engagements between freedom fighters and the Rhodesian soldiers. Many people were killed in the crossfire. And sometimes the enemy could deliberately open fire at innocent and defenseless civilians accusing them of harbouring the so called guerillas. These skirmishes severely destroyed infrastructure such as roads, bridges, schools, hospitals, hotels, clinics, as well as livestock like cattle, goats, donkeys, and even crops in the fields and grain

stocks in the granaries. Families disintegrated as family members escaped for safety. Many children were orphaned while many other people were left homeless, without food to eat.

Many households in Chipinge West constituency did not recover from all these losses. These losses exacerbated their current poverty. This gradually led to many suffering from psychosocial disorders such as emotional stresses, traumas, and even insanity caused by memories of the past. The study needs to unravel that women in Chipinge West constituency is under-represented in works on the armed struggle. Women from that area are also sidelined and their roles in the war of liberation remained untold. It is against this background that the researcher found it imperative to undertake this study in order to expose the long standing and unresolved consequences of the armed struggle. The study will attempt to discern what women in Chipinge West constituency feel about their plight and how they feel they may be assisted to reconcile with their feelings.

0.3. Objectives of the study

This research intends to achieve the following objectives:

1. To illustrate the role played by women to sustain the armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency.
2. To explore the socio-economic, political and cultural challenges faced by women in Chipinge West constituency during the armed struggle.
3. To examine the coping strategies which were employed by women to survive the challenges during the armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency.

4. To examine the degree of moral decadency of the social fabric during the armed struggle.
5. To illustrate the role played by women to sustain the armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency.

0.4. Research questions

1. What role was played by women to sustain the armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency?
2. What socio-economic and political challenges were faced by women during the war of liberation?
3. What coping strategies were employed by women in Chipinge West constituency to survive the challenges during the armed struggle?
4. How did the armed struggle affect the integrity of families in Chipinge West constituency community?
5. How did the armed struggle affect women in Chipinge West constituency?

0.5. Historical Background

The unfolding events of the armed struggle were full of hope and inspiration as many young men and women individually and personally chose to join the struggle either as fighters, collaborators or sociopolitical supports. The idea of political independence forced many to make voluntary sacrifices that could otherwise not have been possible if it were for any form of immediate reward.

People expected salvation at independence. When independence was finally attained, people, at individual, household and community levels had made so many sacrifices. Lives were lost, homes were destroyed, and others were disposed of their precious assets; all through sacrifice. No one complained because it was for a just common cause. It was to become independent. But after independence, promises were not fulfilled. People's hopes were dampened. Bitter memories soured. Women's social reality became apparent. They (women) felt betrayed by the system (revolution) in which they had so much hope and faith.

The lives of women in Chipinge West constituency are consistently characterised by abject poverty, resentment, marginalization and insignificance. And yet women played in this constituency, like anywhere else in the country, played a very risky but effective role of gallantly providing unwavering support to the armed struggle despite all the traumatising losses they experienced. For example, many women are widows. They lost their husbands to the war of liberation but are not liberated themselves.

While women blame their plight to a patriarchal society, which is insensitive to women's needs, they felt seriously neglected for their commitment and sacrifices. They wish if government could recognize and show appreciation of their plight today. Women need assistance but they cannot speak out. They adopted a culture of silence but their degree of poverty continues to haunt them and cannot resist it any more. Instead, many have adopted a fatalistic determinism attitude. But this implies resistance as their questions remain unanswered and their needs unresolved. It is this

scenario which inspired the researcher to want to carry out this study, in case there could be a break-through.

0.6. LITERATURE REVIEW

Many different historians and scholars have written various works and articles on the armed struggle. The armed struggle attracted a lot of research interest amongst scholars during and after the war period. What is disheartening is that many researches that have been carried out so far were unable to depict the negative effects of the armed struggle on women who contributed as war collaborators, women fighters and as women peasants during the war of liberation.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni Sabelo emphasises on political side of the Gukurahundi episode. He explains Gukurahundi as a strategy used by ZANU-PF to control and thwart enemies and how this has similarities with Chimurenga strategy.¹ However; the negative effects of the armed struggle on women in Chipinge West constituency remained untold in his accounts. During the war of liberation, women were more vulnerable and exposed to violence, torture, rape and they were deprived of their rights as they suffered from the armed struggle atrocity

¹J. Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni. *Do Zimbabweans' Exist? Trajectories of Nationalism, National Identity Formation and Crisis in a Postcolonial State*, Peter Lang, Africa in Development Vol 3, Oxford, Bern, Berlin, Bruxelles, Frankfurt am Main New York, 1980, pp. 55-9.

Chakawa Joshua explored on Sell-outs and The Liberation War in Zimbabwe, confined his study to Hurungwe district.² He argued that in Hurungwe, possession of a bicycle, travelling about regularly in the direction in the direction of areas where security forces were based, denying guerrillas to women and supporting ZANU-PF were all aspects of selling out. His study that through oral testimonies established that some people who were killed or heavily punished for selling out were innocent people who were just unfortunate.³ However, the main objective of this study on this case is to analyses how the issue of sell outing impacted on women in Chipinge district in general and Chipinge West constituency during the armed struggle in particular. The study needs to assess how the victims of sell-outing were affected and why were they identified as sell out and what was the fate to the victims if anything happened after their identification.

Mazambani carried out a paramount research on the plight of manufactured female political prisoners, detainees and restrictees in Southern Rhodesia (1959-1980) but was unable to address women as victims of the armed struggle particularly in Chipinge West constituency.⁴ Joshua Nkomo focused on the issue of power struggle and how did he survived the Gukurahundi snares but not alienating the issue of women during the armed struggle.⁵ His central theme approaches the struggle for power and lacking women intervention in the armed struggle.

² J. Chakawa, 'Sell-outs' And the Liberation War in Zimbabwe: The Case of Hurungwe District, In V.Z.Nyawo-Shava(Ed) *Themes in Contemporary History of Zimbabwe Emerging Perspectives in Afrikology*, Mambo Press, Gweru, 2013, page. 10.

³*Ibid*, 10.

⁴I. Mazambani, "Manufactured Prisoners: Female Political Prisoners in Zimbabwe, 1959-1980", In V.Z.Nyawo-Shava(Ed) *Themes in Contemporary History of Zimbabwe Emerging Perspectives in Afrikology*, Mambo Press, Gweru, 2013, page. 44.

⁵*Ibid*, page. 44.

Eliakim Sibanda concentrated on torture, murder and the reasons why the Zimbabwean government implemented the atrocity. Eliakim also wrote about the political history of insurgency in Southern Rhodesia between 1961 and 1987 with a specific reference to Zimbabwe. However, some important events as the armed struggle has been failed to be given credit and the negative impacts of the armed on women in Chipinge West constituency had left out.⁶He focuses on the Gukurahundi genocide of the Ndebele of Matabeleland in the Midlands region. Although the book covers, the period of the armed struggle women of Chipinge West has been left out and finally lack consideration.⁷ It did not appreciate to give a meticulous attention of the bitter situation women faced during the war of liberation era. In particular, in this book, women of Chipinge West constituency were neglected and lack consideration as victims of the armed struggle.

Edgar Tekere, as one of the founding members of ZANU indicates on his autobiography, personal life and the political career as well as his rise to prominence in the national liberation of Zimbabwe. The book concentrated much on events in the life of ZANU-PF both before and after independence as well as the interplay between the National liberation Movement and the national making in the state making but at the same time the situations and experiences of the war faced by women during the war of liberation period did not been engaged here.⁸

⁶ E. Sibanda, *The Zimbabwe African Peoples Union, 1961 -87: A political History of Insurgency in Southern Rhodesia*. World Press, 2005, pp. 12-46.

⁷*Ibid*, pp. 12-46.

⁸E.Tekere,A, *A Lifetime Of Struggle*, Sapes books, Harare, 2007, p.60

Josephine Nhongo-Simbanegavi engaged on the abuse of women during the liberation movement by their male counterparts specifically in refugee. Nhongo focuses on women and ZANLA in Zimbabwe's Liberation Struggle in her book. She indicated in her account that despite ZANU (PF)'s claim to be an emancipator force for women, the movement's rhetoric was not matched by reality.⁹In her literature, Nhongo asserted that in both military and civilian life, women continued to be subordinate to men. She argues that women were denied positions in decision-making bodies and were generally relegated to less valued axillary roles. Nhongo propounded that women's inferior position during the armed struggle mirrored both their pre-and post-war lives. She concludes that far from transforming gender roles, the war further entrenched male dominance. The aim of this research is to address the role of women of Chipinge West constituency during the armed struggle.¹⁰ This study will discuss the losses or deaths experienced by the relatives who lost the lives in the armed struggle.

Nhongo-Simbanegavi explains that during the liberation struggle women continued to perform tasks long associated with their gender as they cooked, washed clothing and performed sexual services for the male guerillas. These roles are also domesticated women and they did not join the war as liberation war fighters in which this study need to address. However, the women in Chipinge West constituency were left out and their roles are sidelined, remained insignificant and they has been not rewarded Nhongo-Simbanegavi discusses that the fulfillment of these

⁹J. Nhongo-Simbanegavi, *For Better or Worse? Women and ZANLA in Zimbabwe's Liberation Struggle*, Harare: Weaver Press, 2000. Page 10.

¹⁰J. Nhongo-Simbanegavi, *For Better or Worse? Women and ZANLA in Zimbabwe's Liberation Struggle*, Harare: Weaver Press, 2000. Page. 10.

tasks was now trumpeted as their patriotic duty.¹¹ It has to be noted that these tasks expanded upon pre-war domestic duties that entailed the carrying of water, firewood, and agricultural products. The study need to indicate the plight of women in Chipinge West constituency in case there could be a break-through. As natural teachers and nurturers, women rallied support among the local population and nursed the injured. She further pinpointed that relatively few women served as guerillas, the exception of a limited number who were connected to powerful men, women were generally excluded from positions of power and authority. This book of Nhongo makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the complexities of Zimbabwe's liberation war. By destroying longstanding myths. It helps to better comprehend the continued subjugation of women in post-independence Zimbabwe and by extension elsewhere in the modern world. In a vivid manner, Nhongo-Simbanegavi tells the story of women escaped from fetching water and firewood and cooking for their families to the more menial work of cooking for male guerillas and carrying food and weapons to from the war front. The author says it was only towards the end of the war in 1977 that ZANLA started slowly recognizing the importance within its ranks. The plight of women indicated in the account, but the story of women peasants of Chipinge West constituency as victims of the war of liberation remained untold. This study need to explain that women were overburdened in the armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency. Women who lived near the Chipinge-Tamandai borders were under-represented because their husbands deserted their homes and seek employment in towns and on tea and coffee plantations. The study still need to confirm the fact that all these issues caused women to be the major victims of the armed struggle. Benson and Chadya explored the prevalence of

¹¹*Ibid*, page. 10.

sexual violence because of industrialisation and urbanisation but their study focuses on Bulawayo.¹² The study will indicate that women in Chipinge West constituency became the major victims of the armed struggle. It will explain that women were victimized by the auxiliaries and rebels and the liberation war fighters who were happened to break the principles of the armed struggle. Further victimized of women by the newly formed political parties such as RENAMO, ZANU- Ndonga, District Administrators, Chimwenje and other rebels in Chipinge West constituency will be explored. Phimister and Onselen also on the deliberate destruction of African peasantry as well as the working class consciousness without indicating the women in the war of liberation.¹³ Zeleza explored on nationalism.¹⁴

Michael reveals and concentrated on his involvement in the politics of the country. He further illustrate from his involvement in the politics of Rhodesia and involvement with the Movement for Democratic Change. The account neglect the plight of women was escaped to mention the women of Zimbabwe in the armed struggle.¹⁵ Norman also explored on desperate attempts to create and perpetuate a one-party state thereby hinder democratic process, used torture against his people and deliberately denied aid organizations.¹⁶ He spend much time on Mugabe's life before and prior to 1980 but did not put in consideration the conditions survived by women

¹²K .Benson and Chadya. J, "ukubhinya: Gender and Sexual Violence in Bulawayo; journal of southern Africa, 31, 2005, page .587.

¹³I. Phimister and Onselen, In A. Auret, *From Liberator to Dictator: An Insider account of Robert Mugabe's descend into tyrant.*2009. pp. 15-47.

¹⁴*Ibid*, pp. 15-47.

¹⁵Michael M .Meredith, *Robert Mugabe: Power, AND Tyranny in Zimbabwe.* Jonathan Ball Publishers, Japperstown: 2002.

¹⁶A. Norman: *Mugabe, Teacher, Revolutionary, Tyrant*, HistoryPress, Stroud, 2008, page. 21.

during the liberation struggle era. In Njambanja, Harrison exploring the collective character of a rebellious character of Zimbabwe devastated by racism, tribalism and dictatorship.¹⁷ Thus why this study aims to address the suffering, ill-treatment, abuse and impacts of the armed struggle on women in Chipinge West constituency.

Tanya Lyons focuses on the plight of women during the national liberation struggle from 1965 up to 1980. It provides an analysis of the plethora of representation of women who joined the struggle for national independence and contributes to a feminist understanding of Zimbabwe and African history and politics.¹⁸ Even though the main theme of the book is to identify women in war, nationalism and independence struggle, anti-colonial and colonial resistance. Tanya further put a clear eye on women's history and Zimbabwean history as well as gender but the plight of women remained uncovered and obscured.¹⁹ The book deals specifically with the case of the Zimbabwean liberation struggle, and provides an in depth analysis of the different experiences of women have and it provides a critique of the feminist perspective in war in Africa. However, it needs to be, said that although this book indicated an in-depth analysis of some experiences of Zimbabwe's national liberation struggle but the author was unable to consider women of Chipinge West constituency as victims of the armed struggle.²⁰ The research left a wider gap which need to be filled by illustrate the experiences of women and their sufferings during the war of liberation era.

¹⁷G .Harrison, <http://www.gukurahundi.org/genocides/zimbabwe.ac.zw>(accessed 30/06/15)

¹⁸T. Lyons, *Guns and Guerrilla Girls*. Africa world press, Trenton, pg 10.

¹⁹T. Lyons, *Guns and Guerrilla Girls*. Africa world press, Trenton, pg 10.

²⁰*Ibid*, page. 10.

Ndabaningi Sithole published his influential African Nationalism in 1959 and a second edition in 1968. In addition he also published numerous newspapers and journal articles. He also wrote a biography of Obed Mutezo in 1970.²¹ He also wrote a novel called *The Polygamist* in 1972. He provided an account of the Zimbabwe Struggle, *Roots of Revolution* in 1977.²² Therefore it needs to be said that even though Rev. Ndabaningi Sithole wrote his publication on Zimbabwe Struggle, *Roots of Revolution* but he was indeed escaped to explore on the negative effects of the armed struggle on women, particularly in Chipinge West constituency yet was his strong hold. Thus this study needs to cover the uncovered gap which other prominent scholars from Chipinge such as Ndabaningi Sithole had left out. He wrote before the emergency of the armed struggle, hence this study intended to raise issues that remained uncovered, especially events that took place in the armed struggle between 1974-9 in Chipinge West constituency. The ideas of the *Roots of the Revolution* helped this study to establish the major reasons for the formation of political parties and causes of the armed struggle in general. Martin and Johnson also explored and published a book on the Zimbabwean struggle. They published their book called *The Struggle for Zimbabwe* in 1981. Their book was published a year after the end of the war of liberation in 1980 in Zimbabwe.²³ However, Martin and Johnson were explaining some events of the armed struggle other than how did the war affects women, particularly women in Chipinge West Constituency during and after the war. Therefore the fact that historians like Martin and Johnson did not depict their writings on the impact of the armed struggle on women has attracted

²¹N. Sithole, *Zimbabwe Struggle: Roots of a Revolution, 1977*, the Editors of *Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc*, 2015. pp 25-35.

²²Ibid, pp. 25-35.

²³Martin. D and P Johnson, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe*, London, 1981

the researcher of this study to explore on an investigation on the impact of the armed struggle on women in Chipinge West Constituency during and after the period between 1974-9.

Norma Krieger explores on guerrilla veterans and the ruling party, colluded with each other and manipulated with each other to establish power and privilege in the army, police, bureaucracy, and among workers.²⁴ Indication of political violence was largely discussed as way to maintain power but did not consider women, as they were remained unraveled. Meredith explained about power, plunders and struggle for Zimbabwe, depicts how and why Mugabe became so dictatorial and in recent years he has embarked on the reign of terror as well as corruption in Zimbabwe.²⁵ However, although the plight of Zimbabweans was generally addressed, women as major players in the armed struggle particularly in Chipinge West constituency did not explored in Meredith's accounts.

0.7. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study intends investigate the impact of the armed struggle on women in Chipinge West during and after the war 1974-9. Both primary and secondary data collection methods used in data gathering. The primary methods used are interviews and desk study. The use of primary methods in collecting data is in most cases regarded as the use of original sources to collect data. Primary and secondary sources were used in carrying out the study. The informants were drawn from various stakeholders who were part of the armed struggle in colonial Zimbabwe from 1974-9. Vansina asserts that fieldwork is imperative for anyone who tries to be credible historian thus,

²⁴N.Krieger, *Guerrilla Veterans in Post War Zimbabwe, symbolic and violent politics 1980-1987*; Cambridge University Press, New York 2003.

²⁵M. Meredith, *Robert Mugabe: Power, AND Tyranny in Zimbabwe*. Jonathan Ball Publishers, Japperstown: 2002.

giving history a human face.²⁶ The researcher will also use secondary sources from the National Archives of Zimbabwe. This will be done for validation and to complement data obtained from the interviews in the field and primary sources and oral sources (firsthand information).

Likewise in depth interviews are to be held on the affected population in Chipinge West Constituency. Qualitative data was collected, analyzed and presented. Concerning the research design of this research, it has to be noted that this study is a qualitative descriptive research. The study also made use of personal interviews. The former women fighters and women peasant were useful in assessing the problems faced during the armed struggle in Chipinge West Constituency. Generally personal interviews provided first hand opinion of the various groups targeted by the research thus providing the study with the necessary data that was used in solving the problem in question. The use of oral testimonies for this study built upon social historians' productive usage of this kind of historical evidence which, for the purposes of this study, provided a view of the lived experiences of women guerillas and women peasants often absent from official written sources as this study needs to unpack. It has to be noted that qualitative approaches are normally specifically responsive in most cases to local situations, conditions and stakeholders needs. It is also of paramount importance to note that qualitative data usually collected in a naturalistic settings and it determines idiographic causation that is the indication of the emergence of certain events.

²⁶J. Vansina, *Oral traditions as historians*, Heinemann, London 1967, page. 25.

It was commonly used because it is not limited to rigidly definable variables and it can also examine complex questions that can be impossible with quantitative methods of research. Griffin has it that qualitative research can focus on the operation of social processes in greater depth.²⁷ Burman and Parker explains the fact that within longitudinal studies involving a series of informal semi-structured interviews and systematic observation can reflect inconsistencies and contradictions within and between individuals' accounts as an important focus for analysis²⁸

Semi structured interviews are when the interviewer and respondents engage in a formal interview. Burnamm has it that the semi structured interview guide provides a clear set of instructions for interviewers and can provide reliable, comparable qualitative data.²⁹ Are also often preceded by observation, informal and unstructured interviewing and to develop a keen understanding of the topic necessarily for developing relevant and meaningful semi-structured questions. These methods used to gather information from chiefs' kraal heads. The inclusion of open-ended questions provides the opportunity for identifying new ways understanding the topic. The benefit of the semi-structured interviews is that questions can be prepared ahead of time and allow informants the flexibility and freedom to express their views in their own terms independently.

²⁷C, Griffin, *The advantages and limitations of qualitative research in psychology and education*, University of Bata.

²⁸E.Burnamm, and Parker, *Discourses in analytical research; Repertous and reading of texts*, London Rutledge .1993.

²⁹*Ibid.*

The researcher will use structured interviews and open ended questions which were found ideal to extract in depth information. It has to be noted that the interview method as one of the methods of data collection is also found reliable and even dependable. The researcher used the face to face interviews because they are flexible; it becomes possible to test the attitude of the person to be interviewed through the interrogation and probe of questions. Denscombe is of the view that interview is particularly good producing data which deals with topics in depth and detail.³⁰ that interviews allows questioning to be guided as one needs it and one can clarify points that needs to be made clearer much more easily than in something like a mailed questionnaire.

However, in some occasions it becomes too difficult for the researcher to establish rapport with the part to be interviewed implies that incorrect information will be given. This exacerbated or caused by the idea that interviews themselves are subjective depending much with one's capacity and one's ability. One of the major disadvantages of interviews is that they were time consuming and thus will limit the researcher to interview a small sample of population. Through the use of interviews in carrying out the study, the researcher was not able to interview a large proportion of the sample because of time which limited to a smaller sample of sample of population. The other problem with interviews is that questioning some people in a formal way made so anxious about why they were being questioned, what they were expected to say and how their responses would be interpreted by the interviewer. Therefore, it becomes challenging to handle enormous amount of information retrieved through the interviews. The researcher will prefer the use of

³⁰M. Denscombe. *The Good Research Guide: Open University Press, McGraw-Hill Education, 1998, page.12.*

interviews in carrying out this study simply because they provide adequate in-depth information on this research since it is social in general and descriptive in particular.

The review literature in the traditional sources, newspapers, and internet sources will enable the researcher to familiarize with various aspects of the impact of armed struggle on women in general. The literature review through other researchers reveals many experiences of women, plight of women and all sorts of abuses on women during the armed struggle in this country. The literature review backed the researcher because it indicates the importance of women during the war, the plight of women of Zimbabwe in general context and the armed struggle experiences and the impact of the war of the whole of this country. This aided design and preparation of research instruments and getting the researcher ready for the field of study. The Review Literature on the impact of the armed struggle enabled the researcher to extract valuable information which formed the basic foundation of the study. The researcher would use purposive sampling to come up with representative sample from which data has to be collected through semi-structured informant interviews and questionnaires. Four wards were to be chosen which are ward 2 [New Year's Gift-Samhutsa], ward 3[Mutema-Manesa], ward 4[Musikavanhu-Birirano] and ward 5[Chipinge-Kondo].

The sampling population is known as a well-defined collection of individuals or objects known to be of similar characteristics. Therefore the target population for this study will be the war veterans, women peasants, chimbwidos and mujibas.

These wards are near transport networks so they were easy to access the impracticality of covering the whole area, considering the extent of Chipinge West necessitated purposive and convenient sampling. The sample population consisted of women peasants, war veterans, chimbwidos and the mujibas, community leaders and survivors of the armed struggle.

The researcher would conduct interviews in four wards. Systematic random sampling could be used to select the respondents that participated in interviews. The snow ball sampling method has to be used in order to reach the key informant during the interviews. From the first informant the researcher approaches the next informant according to the information he has been given by the last interviewee about his or her colleagues whom participated with during the armed struggle or war of liberation in the area of study. Thus interviews would be conducted on household level to reach the key informants. The researcher of this will also ensure the respondents that the data they has been provided would be remaining a secret and would be confidentially kept by the researcher. Babbie and Mouton propounded that in order to ensure confidentiality the researcher may identify the person's response but may promise not to do it publicly.

0.8. Limitations and solutions of the study

The researcher of this study may however face some challenges during the research. These are challenges such as lack of access to information from the Zimbabwe War veteran Association. The researcher may also face challenges in collecting accurate information from the informants as they may fear that the issue will be political to a larger extent as it includes the loss of lives and consider some activities of the recent ZANU PF ruling party and Government. This explains that since Zimbabwe is a polarised state where different people may think differently,

economically, socially, culturally and politically about the war situation or in terms of the armed struggle. Moreover, financial problems may arise as the researcher has no deep source of funding for the project as the researcher may need to commute to and from Chipinge to Gweru which is current residence. The researcher may encounter delays in collecting information due to bureaucratic structures in local authorities and the ministry of local government.

The researcher will however seek permission to access all the information needed for the success of the research. For the second limitation which is challenges in collecting accurate information from the inhabitants of Chipinge West constituency (respondents of the study), the researcher will assure the respondents that the research answers will be used strictly for academic purposes and handled with utmost confidentiality. The researcher will also seek financial assistance from well-wishers and also from close relatives to assist in the research. The researcher will, for the last challenge listed, apply for access to information early to give room for delays and the bureaucratic nature of local authorities in particular.

0.9. Delimitations of the study

The research will be carried out in Chipinge West in four wards. The wards consists of ward three which stretches from Mutema-Manesa area, ward 4 of Musani-Birirano(Bamhamire B to Birirano), ward 2 from New Year's Gift-Ngauni in the Chipinge Highlands and ward 5 which stretches from Chipangayi Commercial Farming area to Kondo. Chipinge West constituency characterised by low income residents and peasant farmers who owns farms distributed to peasants by the government through the Land Reform Programme as well as the Fast Track

Land Reform and Resettlement Programme introduced in the area since the beginning of the 21st Century(2000).The area is relevant as a case study of this research because its people participated vehemently during the armed struggle especially the women peasants. The area is also closer to Mozambique where the liberation war fighters operated from in to war operational zones in Chipinge during the war of liberation.

Chapter one outlines an overview of the armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency. The experiences of Shona women in the pre-colonial and colonial period will be explored. The status of women in Ndau traditional society and their traditional roles as mothers, healers, spirit mediums and women as nurturers will indicated in here. The chapter will also analysed issues of women, gender and the armed struggle in Zimbabwe in general and to show how this can be linked with the armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency.

Chapter two provides a synthesised study of the role played by women in Chipinge West constituency in order to sustain the liberation war effort between 1974-9.The chapter will include two sections. The first section will indicate the roles played by the peasant elderly women to support the liberation war fighters in the armed struggle. The second section will explore the role played by young women to sustain the liberation war effort in Chipinge West constituency during the armed struggle.

The third chapter discusses and outlines problems faced by women in the rural areas and in the Protected Villages. Factors that contributed for victimisation of women will be part and parcel of this study. This chapter will also illustrate the coping strategies employed by women in order to survive the challenges during the armed struggle. Socio-economic, political and cultural effects of the armed struggle and how women affected will be explored in this chapter. The whole study will also briefly summarise at the end or conclusion will also attached at the end in order to summarise the whole study.

CHAPTER ONE

THE BACKGROUND TO THE ARMED STRUGGLE IN CHIPINGE WEST CONSTITUENCY

Introduction

The main objective of this chapter is to illustrate the experiences of women in the pre-colonial period in Zimbabwe in general. The motives that spurred women peasants in Chipinge West constituency to participate in the armed struggle during the period 1974-9 will be explored. The experiences of women in Zimbabwe during the colonial period will be part and parcel of this chapter. It is of greater importance to note that the colonial authorities soon after 1890 imposed laws that marginalised subordinated and exposed women to some vulnerabilities which led to their loss of the traditional status. The experiences of women during the colonial period through land alienation and its engendered perspective will be demonstrated. The position of women in Chipinge in the traditional Ndau society which provided lessons for their roles to be regarded as insignificant, unrecognised and marginalised by their male counterparts during the armed struggle will be highlighted. This chapter will also cover issues on women as mothers. The role of women as nurturers in Ndau traditional society will be considered in this paper. The importance of women as spirit mediums (*masvikiro*) in Ndau tradition and culture that was later used as a source of power during the armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency since 1974-9 will be illustrated. This study also discusses women, gender and the armed struggle and illustrates how this has affected the women in Chipinge West constituency.

1.1. Experiences of women in pre-colonial Zimbabwe-before 1890

The conventional interpretation of pre-colonial Zimbabwean society is biased against African culture due to cultural imperialism. In traditional societies women had different roles and concerns from those of women in the colonial period. They considered themselves as people who were carrying out their duties both in the domestic and public spheres. In the domestic realm women were responsible for the family and home based tasks. These included food processing, cooking and cleaning. This clearly indicates that women's roles in the armed struggle can be traced back from roles that they undertook in the pre-colonial society in Zimbabwe. Most scholars agree that before the colonial period land was not owned by an individual in Zimbabwe. Davidson attests that the authority to allocate land was with the chief who gave the rights to the headman to distribute land in the family as necessary to male members of the lineage.³¹ It was the chief's choice to identify the non-lineage individuals. However, chiefs had powers over land and its distribution in the traditional societies. The system was unfair largely because it was really gender biased and insensitive as it favoured men while it neglected and sidelined women.

The participation of the African women during the allocation of land and political authority in the traditional society was generally limited and normally linked to male members of the family. This was linked to father, brother or son. Peters and Peters assert that women had to put their hope in the bearing of male children who could one day hold the authority of land ownership or distribution.³² Therefore, women's access to land was dependent on their duties within the

³¹J. Davidson, *Agriculture, Women and the Land: The African Experience*, Colorado, West view Press, 1988, page. 237.

³²B. Peters and J. Peters, "*Women and Land Tenure Dynamics in Pre-Colonial, Colonial and Post-Colonial Zimbabwe*", *Journal of Public and International Affairs*, 9(0), 1998, page. 201.

gendered divisions of labour. Prior to the forcible occupation of Zimbabwe by the British settler column in 1890, tradition and customs recognised a patriarchal society. It is the thrust of this study to explain how this background related to the suffering of women during the armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency between 1974-9.

In the traditional patriarchal society, wars were naturally believed to be fought by male members but women provided all the necessary food from the rear while they took care of the family and property in the absence of men. According to the then Prime Minister of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe, “it was never conceived that they could go to the front and alongside men, attacked the enemy with spears, battle axes or bows and arrows”.³³ This was then the traditional position of women before European settlement in 1890. In addition, the role of women in society was largely complementary to that of men. During the first Zimbabwean Women’s Seminar, President Robert Mugabe explained that the head of the family was the men.³⁴ Furthermore, he said that and not the women who gave his blood children all of whom became known after him and naturally belonged to his clan adopting both his *mutupo* (totem) and *chidawo* (praise totem).³⁵ A woman continued to maintain her clan and blood ties with her own family and never lost her *mutupo* although she lost her *chidawo*. Therefore a woman was regarded as a stranger to the man’s family (*mutorwa*). The child born of her, despite the nine months she carries in her womb, was never hers by customary right of ownership but she/he remained her child only as long as the marriage between her and the husband was good. It is from this backdrop that the liberation

³³Robert Mugabe, “First Zimbabwe Women’s Seminar,” in *Our War of Liberation: Speeches, Articles, Interviews, 1976-1979* (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1983), page 2.

³⁴*Ibid*, page 2.

³⁵Robert Mugabe, “First Zimbabwe Women’s Seminar,” in *Our War of Liberation: Speeches, Articles, Interviews, 1976-1979* (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1983), page 2.

movement tendencies continued to make women inferior and subservient to their male counterparts as will be shown later in this study. The study will also show how this impacted on women during and after the armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency in particular.

President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, in one of his speeches, outlined that in a traditional society, the payment of dowry entitled the man to marry the woman, bring her to his home and demand her domestic and agricultural field services.³⁶ Noteworthy is the fact that in every case no woman could marry without parental consent. In a traditional patriarchal society women were not allowed to sit at a court to hear cases although they were allowed to become witnesses. But there were definite recognizable features of their limited dominance. They were the midwives and shared with men a rare phenomenon of being a spirit medium. This phenomenon was also applied by the people of Ndau dialect in Chipinge district during the war of liberation. In addition women carried out certain common activities such as working in the fields, herding cattle (though principally a boys' role) and collecting firewood.

Having explored the experiences of women in the primordial Shona societies on the above section, the next section will substantiate the experiences of women in the colonial Zimbabwe (soon after 1890). It will explain the ways in which European colonialism changed structures of the primordial societies in Zimbabwe and to outline how this was linked to the suffering of

³⁶Robert Mugabe, "First Zimbabwe Women's Seminar," in *Our War of Liberation: Speeches, Articles, Interviews, 1976-1979* (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1983), page. 2.

women during and after the national war of liberation in Chipinge West constituency between the 1974-9.

1.2. Experiences of women in colonial Zimbabwe-after 1890

The years of most intense colonialism was then followed by increased warfare when the Europeans attempted, and in most cases succeeded, in enforcing their own political control over African communities. Africans resisted these incursions from the beginning and the first nationalist movements arose in the early twentieth century culminating in successful transfers to independent status for most African nations in the 1950s and 1960s. Schmidt Elizabeth analysed the changes that colonialism caused to the Shona women. She discussed women's agricultural work and engagement in market activities, missionary education and domesticity and work in European households.³⁷ In addition, she also demonstrates how the attempts of African and colonial men to control female sexuality were central to the shaping of Southern Rhodesian political economy.³⁸

Women's pre-colonial political activities were generally disregarded by the colonial authorities who turned exclusively to men when they established local political offices. The analysis of development of legal systems under colonialism suggests that women were at a disadvantage as customary laws were established based on male testimony that gave men, especially elite men, advantages over women in issues of marriage and divorce. According to Chogugudza, it is

³⁷E. Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders and Wives: Shona Women in the History of Zimbabwe, 1870-1939*. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1992. pp 37-46.

³⁸*Ibid*, pp. 37-46.

against this backdrop that at the inception of the revolutionary struggle, Zimbabwean women, like their counterparts in Mozambique, Angola, and Guinea-Bissau, joined the armed struggle.³⁹ Their hope was that with the revolution, gender equality would be certain. Women who could not conform to tradition saw the revolution as an opportunity to escape difficult situations.⁴⁰ According to Hunter, European culture disrupted economic activities and altered social organisation.⁴¹ In addition, among the earliest scholarly reports based on extensive observation, Hunter also explains that women lost ground economically but gained some freedom due to loosening kin control.⁴² In many parts of West Africa women were members of associations run by and for women and which gave women the final say in disputes over markets or agriculture as noted by Hunter.⁴³

In addition, the colonial period atrocities faced by women in Africa shaped the long standing beliefs that caused men to undermine, in every sense, women's participation or effort. Nakanyike Musisi, an African feminist scholar maintains that during the pre-colonial and colonial period, African women "became an extension of African male bodies," living in circumstances that were different, if not worse, than those of their male counterparts, with women's lack of participation in the cash economy shifting their traditionally circumscribed power to positions in which autonomy was almost impossible.⁴⁴

³⁹ P. Chogugudza, *Gender and War: Zimbabwean Women and the Liberation Struggle*, Enter Text 6.2, page 236.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, page 236.

⁴¹ M. Hunter, "The Effects of Contact with Europeans on the status of Pondo Women." *Africa* 6.3, 1933, pp 259-276.

⁴² *Ibid*, pp259-276.

⁴³ *Ibid*, pp 259-276.

⁴⁴ Nakanyike Musisi, "Colonial and Missionary Education: Women and Domesticity in Uganda, 1900-1945" in Karen Tranberg Hansen, ed., *African Encounters with Domesticity*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992, page. 172.

It can be argued, therefore, that the studies of women's work during the colonial period often show that they lost power and economic autonomy with the arrival of cash crops and women's exclusion from the global market place. This explains that men and international commerce benefited because they were able to rely to some extent on women's innumerable labour.

This study also needs to unveil the ways in which women in Chipinge West constituency were excluded from the public sphere. The literature review and the overview of this research outlines and stressed, in general, the fact that women were excluded from participation in the armed struggle but remained at home as mothers. However, in, "Mothers of The Revolution", Staunton argues that women were involved in the struggle in a wide variety of ways that extended far beyond the associated duties of motherhood.⁴⁵

Soon after the first colonial settlement in 1890, the hut tax law was passed as an alternative to ensure the migration of the Shona men fell into a pull of migrant labour on farms and mines. With or without this background, women still did not have full rights to the ownership of land. This almost left every Shona woman economically overburdened as the de facto heads of their homes. Gaidzanwa notes that colonialism intensified the economic dependence of peasant women on men.⁴⁶ This indicates that the roles that women fulfilled during the armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency between 1974-9 can be traced back to their designated engendered

⁴⁵ I. Staunton. *Mothers of the Revolution*, Bloomington, Indiana, Indiana University Press, 1990, pp-19-20.

⁴⁶ R. Gaidzanwa. *Women's Land Rights in Zimbabwe: An Overview*, Department of Rural and Urban Planning, University of Zimbabwe, Occasional Paper, no 13, 1981, page. 9.

roles of the traditional patriarchal society and the provisions of the colonial Zimbabwe. Patricia Chogugudza argues that the emergence of colonialism encouraged the movement of African men to towns as workers, but controlled the migration of women, thus shifting the distribution of power and economy in favour of men.⁴⁷ This study will indicate that colonial characteristics have a stance in the armed struggle because it encouraged participation of men rather than women.

Not only were women kept away from the cash flow in the colonial period, but as African men entered settler employment in towns, the women left behind had to fill in as *de facto* heads of households. This resulted in increased workloads for women with little or no remuneration. Women worked for sixteen hours a day, carrying out their customary tasks as well as those tasks traditionally allocated to their now absent spouses. This also applied situationally as it became part and parcel of the everyday experiences of women when their husbands were absent during the armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency between 1974-9. This study will later indicate how the armed struggle impacted on women economically.

The European imperialists who colonized Zimbabwe in the late nineteenth century sought to destroy, marginalise or denigrate women's traditional authority and replace it with Western approaches which were in line with their goals of colonialism. Following the colonial period women's position changed and became despicable.

⁴⁷M. W Dube., (Ed), *HIV/AIDS and the Curriculum: Methods of Integrating HIV/AIDS in Theological programmes*, Geneva, Switzerland: WCC Publications, 2003.pp 84-100.

1.3. Influence of tradition and culture on Ndau women in Chipinge

This section will explore the influence of tradition and culture on women. This will explain the significance of the role of tradition and culture on the part that they played during the armed struggle in Chipinge West Constituency. It will also demonstrate the role played by women during the armed struggle and how it was bound by their tradition and cultural beliefs to a larger extent.

Many historians have carried out researches on Zimbabwean tradition and culture in general. Mapuranga explained how African feminism and African culture affects and shapes the role of traditional women in Chipinge.⁴⁸ She explores the role of tradition and culture of Ndau society on a religious perspective. This study traces the effects of the armed struggle on traditional peasants' women through the analysis of tradition and culture of Ndau people in Chipinge West constituency in particular. Ezra Chitando avers that cultural trends are better understood if the historical factors that have shaped them are understood.⁴⁹ Therefore the main thrust of this study is to build the evidence on the importance of tradition and culture particularly in Chipinge West constituency and how this contributed to gender imbalances, gender insensitivity and inequalities during the armed struggle between 1974-9. In Zimbabwe the Ndau people are generally looked down upon by other Shona groups and often labeled traditional, backward and uneducated as

⁴⁸ T. P. Mapuranga, *A Phenomenological Investigation into the Effects of Traditional Beliefs and Practices on Women and HIV & AIDS*, with special reference to Chipinge District, Zimbabwe. Department of Religious Studies Classics and Philosophy, University of Zimbabwe, June 2010, page 44.

⁴⁹E.Chitando, 'A curse of the Western Heritage? Imagining Religion in an African Context, *Journal of the Study of Religion* Vol.10 (2), 1997, pp. 77-98.

Tapiwa Mapuranga posits in her study.⁵⁰ She argues that Chipinge is considered as one of the less developed districts in Zimbabwe⁵¹. The African tradition is generally associated with what is evil. Traditionally, women in Chipinge were generally regarded as witch doctors. In an interview with an elderly woman in Samhutsa area of Chief Mutema, she said:

Zvinotoba zikanwa kuti kubvira kudhaya kwemene mukadzi waitozi
ndiye muroyi asi arume chero echiroyawo zvainga zvisina ndaa maniningi.
Apana mukadzi wai rambirwe kuroya asi ndiye waitonyanya kudiwa kunyanya
pabarika. Murume waiti ndiyo tseyo yangu.⁵²

To translate this is to say:

It is generally known that even in the far long back women were regarded as witch doctors than men although it was not taken seriously as a crime. Women were not divorced as they were be witching but were the most loved ones in a polygamous family. Men believed in such women as their strengths.

This is to indicate that the Ndaue people were culturally and traditionally oriented. Ndaue tradition and culture in Chipinge West constituency shaped their Ubuntu to be unique in Zimbabwe. The

⁵⁰Mapuranga, *A Phenomenological Investigation into the Effects of Traditional Beliefs and Practices on Women and HIV & AIDS*, 44.

⁵¹Mapuranga, *A Phenomenological Investigation into the Effects of Traditional Beliefs and Practices on Women and HIV & AIDS*, pp 44-5.

⁵²Interview with elderly woman in Samhutsa on 18/09/2015.

uniqueness of the Ndau tradition and culture became more important during the armed struggle. One interviewee with Tapiwa Mapuranga appraised the importance of the Ndau tradition and culture by saying:

Eya tinodada yaamho ngekuti mundau dzeshe dzaungazwa, akuna nyika ichakadai ngeChipinge. Tisu tichine chianhu chakagwinya. Vana vedu vachikuroorwa vari mhandara, afana edu vachikukona mabasa echirume akadai ngekuvhima. Tsika dzichakagwinya munharaunda dzedu. Dai zvinyari zvakaita sekurapa, ukaenda kuri nekuri, kunyari Harareyo, Joni, unozwaveitsvaka n'anga, anagodobori vanobva Chipinge. Zvichimwo mungazi.⁵³

This is literally translated to say,

We are proud of our culture in Chipinge. We are the only ones who still preserve our Ubuntu. Our girls are married as virgins; our boys still have the art of hunting amongst other traditional roles. Even in social areas such as healing, everywhere you go, be it in Harare, the capital city, or even in South Africa, people still ask for traditional healers from Chipinge. It runs in our blood (veins).

Therefore, the pride that the Ndau people had in the fighting against Rhodesian Security Forces can be referred to their strength in their tradition and culture. Opoku argues that it serves to

⁵³Interview with Sekuru Sibiyi on 29/06/2007: In Tapiwa Mapuranga, pp 45-6.

preserve the memory of the ancestors and captures how the beliefs and practices have been handed down from generation to generation.⁵⁴

1.4. A general overview of the role of women in Ndau traditional community.

The roles or duties that elderly and young women performed in the armed struggle in Chipinge West can be traced back to the tradition and culture. The Ndau tradition and culture subordinated and marginalised women naturally. Mapuranga also holds the view that in Ndau tradition and culture, believed that women could not go to war or hunting whilst their men are present.⁵⁵ The Ndau culture always separates men's every day routine to that of their female counterparts. There is always division of labour. The division of labour among men and women during the armed struggle holds a common place in the history of the Ndau people in Chipinge West constituency as this study will illustrate later.

1.5. Women as mothers and nurturers in traditional Ndau community

This section analyses the position of women in Ndau community of Chipinge district in particular. The position of women in the Ndau society can be traced from Ndau tradition. The Ndau women's position as mothers can be analysed from their role at family level. This study will highlight later that the role of Ndau women as mothers exposed them to the negative effects of the armed struggle which then became a burden rather than a joy and pride of motherhood.

⁵⁴K.A. Opoku, 'African Traditional Religion: an enduring heritage', in J. K. Olupona and S. S. Nyang, eds., *Religious Plurality in Africa: Essays in Honour of John S. Mbiti*, Mouton: Gruyter, 1993, pp67-82.

⁵⁵ Mapuranga, *A Phenomenological Investigation into the Effects of Traditional Beliefs and Practices on Women and HIV & AIDS*, pp44-46.

The body of literature indicates that motherhood provides Ndaou women with pride in society. The degree of importance of a woman in Ndaou society is measured through motherhood as Mapuranga posits in her study where she analyses the status of women and their part as mothers in Ndaou society.⁵⁶

From the Ndaou cultural perspective, a strong woman could be a bearer of more boys than girls. According to Dube, women are good only when they become mothers and even better esteemed when they give birth to sons.⁵⁷ Traditional practices largely dictated what became culturally accepted as rights and duties of spouses. *For example, women were required to have a male representative (brother, father, husband) in a public transaction and this rendered them perpetual minors before the law.* In addition, this study will outline in chapter two, the traditionally ascribed roles of Ndaou women as mothers and care givers in the community.

One other important aspect of women in Ndaou community in Chipinge is child-bearing. In this regard, women were also a vital element of the Ndaou community. In the Ndaou tradition and culture motherhood played a crucial role in nurturing all the members of the community. A major responsibility of women generally is to take care of children, elderly people, the sick and the injured.⁵⁸

⁵⁶*Ibid*, pp44-47.

⁵⁷M.W. Dube, (Ed), *HIV/AIDS and the Curriculum: Methods of Integrating HIV/AIDS in Theological programmes*, Geneva, Switzerland: WC Publications, 2003.pp 84-100.

⁵⁸ Mapuranga, *A Phenomenological Investigation into the Effects of Traditional Beliefs and Practices on Women and HIV & AIDS*, pp 54-55.

The Ndaou tradition and culture expects women (sister, mother, aunt or grandmother) to take care of every individual in the community, as noted by Mapuranga, be it a sister, mother, aunt or grandmother.⁵⁹ In Ndaou Society women's role is to take care of their children. In like manner during the armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency women became important as nurturers of the sick and injured at societal, community and village level. Naturally, in the traditional Ndaou society women were treated as natural mothers. Women in Ndaou society were believed to have responsibilities such as to teach every aspect of life to children as well as raising children⁶⁰. The fact that Ndaou women are better traditional nurturers of every individual in their society amplified their role as nurturers as well in the war of liberation in Chipinge West constituency between 1974-79.

1.6. Women as spirit media, healers and diviners in the Ndaou community

The role of women as traditional healers in Ndaou community in Chipinge generally extends to the period of the war of liberation when women played an important role as healers. Curing the wounded, the injured and nursing the sick became some of the major roles designated naturally by the war situation. The thrust of this part of this chapter is to unravel the fact that some peasant women in Chipinge contributed to the armed struggle as healers, nurses of the wounded and sick freedom fighters during the armed struggle.

The Ndaou women as traditional healers could heal ailments such as stomach pains, headaches, backaches, swollen legs, dizziness as well as influenza by using a variety of magical

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, pp 54-55.

⁶⁰Mapuranga, *A Phenomenological Investigation into the Effects of Traditional Beliefs and Practices on Women and HIV & AIDS*, pp 54-55.

concoctions. This manifests the knowledge of Ndau women in Chipinge had about the natural medicine. One can conclude that since women had responsibilities to take care of the home and children at family level they could naturally do the same at community level during the armed struggle. This is why the institution of healing was largely dominated by women. Women who became traditional healers [or could be possessed] were given more respect. Shoko is of the view that when possessed a woman acquires considerable power which she does not have in normal life.⁶¹ She maintains that women as healers enjoyed overwhelming powers and authority.⁶² Such women's experiences as healers with authority, during the armed struggle will be illustrated in this study.

In the traditional Ndau community in Chipinge district, women played an important role as spirit media. It is important to point out that those women who were possessed by the ancestral spirits were given much respect in their communities. As already mentioned in the previous paragraphs of this chapter, women who became possessed by the ancestral spirits were largely in a position to direct men and give instructions during the war against the movements of the enemy. It is against this background that such women assisted liberation fighters and the civilian population through their powers to heal many different ailments. It is along these traditional customs and religious perspectives that gave hope and strong beliefs of the Ndau community to adhere to women spirit medias' advise during the armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency.

⁶¹Shoko, T., 'HIV/AIDS and Christian in Zimbabwe', in J.N Amanze (et.al) *Christian Ethics and HIV/AIDS in Africa*, Bay Publishing, Botswana2007. Pp203-213.

⁶²*Ibid*, pp203-213.

In her analysis on the Ndaу African Traditional Religion in Chipinge district in general Mapuranga maintains that, from a religious studies perspective, Ndaу women hold important offices⁶³. She further argues that ancestral veneration is the heart beat of religious life amongst the Ndaу people of Chipinge⁶⁴. She explains that female (*n'angas*) healers are better than their male counterparts.⁶⁵ It needs to be highlighted that the body of literature on Ndaу African Religion, indeed, indicates that there were very few Ndaу female ancestral spirit media but they held special positions in Ndaу tradition and culture. It is therefore noted that the Ndaу female spirit media were also possessed by the spirit of healing (*shai rekurapa*). Historically, with this backdrop it can be traced back to the role of female spirit media in Ndaу community in Chipinge West during the armed struggle. This also shapes how the role of divination impacted on female spirit media during and after their liberation war effort.

1.9. Women and the armed struggle in Zimbabwe

Many scholars emphasise that women had a lot of supporting responsibilities during the armed struggle such as surveillance, preparing meals, security and sometimes doing laundry for the freedom fighters.

According to Stephanie Urdang, in revolutionary war situations there is often no defined front line and both women and children can come directly under attack. Thus, the stereotyped image of men going off to war and women staying home away from the conflict has to be radically

⁶³ Mapuranga, *A Phenomenological Investigation into the Effects of Traditional Beliefs and Practices on Women and HIV & AIDS*, pp 54-55.

⁶⁴ Ibid, pp 55-6.

⁶⁵ Mapuranga, *A Phenomenological Investigation into the Effects of Traditional Beliefs and Practices on Women and HIV & AIDS*, page 57.

⁶⁵ Ibid, pp 55-6.

revised⁶⁶. The thrust of this study is to analyse the concept of gender and war in Chipinge District. Peasant women in Chipinge contributed vehemently to the liberation war effort. Despite their war effort women at home remain unrecognized. Chogugudza attests that the position of women in the liberation struggle shows that wars have to be judged not just from the position of men, but also from the position of women who incessantly struggle to sustain the force of the revolution.⁶⁷ This analysis focuses on the suffering experienced by peasant women due to the turbulence caused by the armed struggle as well as the need to fulfill the demands of the liberation war effort during and after the period 1974-79.

Following the declaration of the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) by the then Prime Minister, Ian Smith declared independence of Rhodesia from Britain and this worsened living conditions of all Africans from both urban and rural areas. Women suffered most than their male counterparts, resulting from their effort to acquire black majority rule. It can be argued that women joined in the liberation war effort because their contribution was a must. According to the late President of the neighbouring Mozambique, Samora Machel, in stressing the need for the involvement of women in the war of liberation, he pointed out that, “Is a fundamental necessity for the revolution, the guarantee of its continuity and the precondition for its victory”.⁶⁸ The attainment of independence by Zimbabwe can also be credited to women’s participation in the liberation war. Without the participation of women in the armed struggle Zimbabwe could not have had difficulties in attaining its independence. Robert Mugabe once said that, “Without women’s full participation, the struggle for a social, political, economic and cultural

⁶⁶S. Urdang, *And Still They Dance: Women, War, and the Struggle for Change in Mozambique*, London: Earth scan, 1989, page. 227.

⁶⁷Chogugudza, *Gender and War: Zimbabwean Women and the Liberation Struggle*, page. 31.

⁶⁸Samora Machel, *Mozambique: Sowing the Seeds of Revolution* (Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1981), page. 25.

independence of a country may not be achieved.”⁶⁹ According to Patricia Chogugudza, the revolution’s standpoint in the war zone simply expanded upon pre-war domestic duties that designated women as mothers and servers of the nation.⁷⁰ Since females are generally known for being as good as natural teachers and nurturers, women were expected to rally support among the war population; nursing the injured. She further argues that, generally, with the exception of a limited number of women fighters, who were connected to powerful men, relatively few women were engaged in the real battles compared to men.⁷¹ Chogugudza maintains that, it can be argued that while the liberation struggle in theory paved the way for the increased social and political involvement of women, the actual participation that would have achieved female emancipation was tightly constrained.⁷² One can be persuaded to believe that despite the need for the consideration of the women’s war effort, male leaders in the armed struggle and men guerrillas did not acknowledge women as their equals. Chogugudza avers that, psychologically, men still expected women to stay at home and perform chores which were customarily prescribed as the domestic domain.⁷³ However despite these arguments women played a significant role in the armed struggle regardless of whether they were at the battle front or as auxiliaries in the battlefield.

Bhebhe and Ranger ‘in an interview with a female combatant, Catherine Nyamandwe, she said, ‘I remember being advised by male freedom fighters to “return home because if girls left for Mozambique, no one would cook for male freedom fighters’.⁷⁴ They further uphold that ZANLA and ZIPRA nationalist leaders, far from transforming colonial or traditional gender roles during the war actually

⁶⁹Robert Mugabe, “First Zimbabwe Women’s Seminar,” in *Our War of Liberation: Speeches, Articles, Interviews, 1976-1979* (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1983), page 75.

⁷⁰P. Chogugudza, *Gender and War: Zimbabwean Women and the Liberation Struggle*, pp 33-6.

⁷¹*Ibid*, 36-41.

⁷²P. Chogugudza, *Gender and War: Zimbabwean Women and the Liberation Struggle*, pp 36-42.

⁷³*Ibid*, pp 38-44.

⁷⁴Ngwabi Bhebe and Terence Ranger, “Soldiers in Zimbabwe’s Liberation War” (*Canadian Journal of African Studies/Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines* 31.1, 1997), page. 119.

enmeshed male dominance into the revolutionary ethos, by continually allocating women to perform tasks long-associated with their feminine roles.⁷⁵ Cathrine in her interview with Bhebhe and Ranger, pointed that at the end of the war of liberation, these tasks were merely seen to have been merely women's patriotic duty and not in any way equal to actual engagement in the struggle, thus making it very difficult for women to receive compensation since only those who had fought in real combat were being recognised.⁷⁶

Many of women's roles in the armed struggle exposed them to more vulnerability as compared to men. For example, as previously mentioned, preparing meals for the freedom fighters, doing laundry and providing security and surveillance. Women suffered most during the war of liberation in Chipinge West constituency because women's coping strategies were by far different from coping strategies used by their male counterparts. For example, while men could run away in the event of an emergence like airplanes bombings, women would be inhibited by a desire to protect their children. Tanya Lyons pointed out that a major predicament faced by women in most guerrilla movements is that women have difficulties in actually verifying their actions.⁷⁷ Chogugudza maintains that as armed conflicts affect the revolutionary cadres and non-participatory civilians, the coping strategies adopted under the pressure differ by, and to a large degree, are determined by gender.⁷⁸ It is further argued that women's vulnerability was generally caused by their physical stature and their position in society increases the burdens placed on them making gender an important element in the determination of coping strategies.⁷⁹

⁷⁵*Ibid*, pp. 119-20.

⁷⁶*Ibid*, pp. 119-20.

⁷⁷Tanya Lyons, *Guns and Guerrilla Girls: Women in the Zimbabwean Liberation Struggle* Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2003, page. 39.

⁷⁸P. Chogugudza, *Gender and War: Zimbabwean Women and the Liberation Struggle*, pp. 40-44.

⁷⁹*Ibid*, pp. 44-5.

In addition, Urdang asserts that, conflict accentuates resourcefulness in the adoption of coping and survival strategies.⁸⁰

The concept of gender also played an important part in the nationalist liberation struggle. Nehanda Nyakasikana, indeed, therefore, had a great inspiration for the Shona women to join the so-called *Second Chimurenga* in the 1960s.⁸¹ Nehanda was a woman, a spirit medium, initiator and central organizer of the 1896-8 uprising/ *First Chimurenga* in Mashonaland against the Rhodesian colonialism. It is against this background, therefore, that significant numbers of women in Chipinge West constituency, like elsewhere in Zimbabwe were encouraged to participate in the armed struggle either as civilians or as armed combatants although they operated in other areas, other than Chipinge West constituency.

Martin and Johnson argue that Nehanda Nyakasikana, a woman, purposefully took up arms and through the spirit that possessed her is said to have deviated military advice to the Shona people.⁸² It has been proclaimed that she was eventually arrested for the killing of Native Commissioner Pollard and was sentenced to be hanged, but at her death, she stated that her bones would rise again in the fight against colonialism. Notably, eighty years later, in 1976, the spirit of Nehanda inspired guerrilla fighters during the *Second Chimurenga*, through possessed spirit mediums⁸³. In a bid to unveil the effects of the armed struggle on women and gender, that prominent scholars like Nhongo-Simbanegavi argues that, without denying the essential tasks that women carried out during the liberation movement, it appears

⁸⁰Stephanie Urdang, *And Still They Dance: Women, War, and the Struggle for Change in Mozambique*, London: Earthscan, 1989, page. 227.

⁸¹ Martin David and Phyllis Johnson, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe: The Chimurenga War*, London: Faber and Faber, 1981, pp.349-52.

⁸²Martin David and Phyllis Johnson, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe: The Chimurenga War*, London: Faber and Faber, 1981, 349-352.

⁸³*Ibid*, 349-352.

that their ‘militarisation and mobilisation did not [ultimately] bring changes in the gender division of labour, and in male-female power relations.’⁸⁴ In addition Tanya Lyons pointed out that nationalist and feminist analysis that women fought equally and heroically with men during the war but gained little compared with men afterwards — need to be challenged as a theoretical perspective.⁸⁵

⁸⁴J. Nhongo-Simbanegavi, *For Better or Worse? Women and ZANLA in Zimbabwe’s Liberation Struggle*, Harare: Weaver Press, 2000, page.123.

⁸⁵ Tanya Lyons, “*The Forgotten Soldiers: Women in Zimbabwe Liberation War*”, *Southern Africa Report* 12.2, 1997, page 2.

CHAPTER TWO

SPECIFIC ROLES OF WOMEN IN THE ARMED STRUGGLE IN CHIPINGE WEST CONSTITUENCY

Introduction

The chapter will unravel the specific roles performed by women in sustaining the liberation war effort. It will also portray women as staunch supporters of the armed liberation struggle. This part clearly analyses the multiple roles that were played by peasant women to support the liberation war effort in Chipinge West constituency as evidenced by multiple interviews conducted in the constituency.

2.1. Peasant women and sustenance of the liberation war effort

The study illustrated that through participation women took part in solving problems in the rural areas during the armed struggle. Chipinge West constituency was amongst many operation zones. This meant that during the war the Rhodesian Security Forces and the ZANLA freedom fighters clashed as they both wanted support from the civilian population especially women who used to be at home throughout the war period. As this study explained earlier, Chipinge West constituency was amongst those areas which were operation zones where liberation war fighters were operating from and gaining the support of the peasant rural women. For example, one war veteran who operated and experienced the armed struggle in Chipinge-Tamandai border said that Chipinge West constituency was both a transit and an operation zone during the armed struggle.

Women communities along the border and in the interior provided all forms of required logistical support.⁸⁶

However, although fear became a major factor which deterred the participation of many rural women during the armed struggle, the conducted interviews indicated that women played important roles to sustain the armed struggle. Through oral testimonies, one female respondent from Bamhamire village had this to say:

Women worked so hard during the war and it was dangerous my child,
because the soldiers came there at the same time the comrades (guerrillas)
visited us as they needed material goods for survival in the bush whilst fighting
the enemy. In this place, it is where the war was fought seriously than anywhere
else. Women had their own ways which others do not have in any parts of this
country except us. Some of those scenarios we were engaged in, was carrying
sadza on the back as if we are caring young baby, then we went on to handover
to ZANLA fighting forces in the dark forest at Chinyinyii or Nyarigire mountains.
We were supposed to do that every day in the darkness or before sun rise.⁸⁷

This explains that although there were designated ways of carrying out duties by the ZANLA liberation forces for rural women to help to sustain the liberation war effort, but evidence from

⁸⁶*Interview* with war veteran, about the operational war zones and role of women in Chipinge West constituency to sustain the liberation war effort, 27/09/2015.

⁸⁷ *Interview* with female respondent, about war environment and women as food providers to liberation war fighters.

conducted interviews indicate that rural women in Chipinge West constituency embarked on their own alternatives and formulas to support the liberation struggle. Rural women supported the ideology of the liberation struggle and added some of their own resources. The study established that total commitment by rural women of Chipinge West constituency to support the armed struggle can be referred to war effort that has been given by women in other districts of the post independent Zimbabwe. The similarity of such effort provided by the rural peasant women in Chipinge West constituency can be traced from the example of Wedza district cited by Simbanegavi-Nhongo as an area that was fully embroiled by war from 1976 until the ceasefire in 1979; rural women actively participated in the war effort.⁸⁸

Following the midst of the liberation war period 1974-79 elderly peasant women in Chipinge West Constituency in the rural set up were responsible for providing protection to liberation fighters. This research revealed through oral testimonies that women provided protection to the liberation war fighters through the provision of hospitality to the liberation war fighters. In an interview with a 55 year old woman who lives in Mutema area, she vividly said:

Panguwa yehondo kunyanya muna 1976 hondo yava pakati Smith aise
anhu muma khipi (keeps/protected areas) makomuredhi vai uya kuseri
kweyaya usiku anhu otange kuata zviya ocheke waya usiku kuti vano
vape chekurya nemagumbezi azo pinda ndipo. Isusu akadzi tisu tai vapa

⁸⁸J. Nhongo-Simbanegavi, *For Better or Worse? Women and ZANLA in Zimbabwe's Liberation Struggle*, Harare: Weaver Press, 2000, page xxx.

This translates to say:

During the war especially in 1976 when the war was at its climax, when Ian Douglas Smith put the African blacks in the protected areas, the comrades came through behind the back of the fenced area in the night when people were asleep, then they cut the fence so that those who provided them with food and blankets may pass through. We, women, gave them where to sleep and accommodated them in order to hide them from the Rhodesian Forces.

Women supported and accelerated the defeat of the enemy through their innovativeness in the armed struggle. Women contributed to sustain the liberation war effort as this study explored. In the armed struggle, women were more flexible or mobile than men. The war situation, especially in Chipinge West constituency made it very difficult for the civilian men to participate in a similar way with their female counterparts as men remained the major target to the Rhodesian Security Forces and police. One female respondent emphasised that her husband opted to spend most of his time hiding in a suit case inside a granary in order to avoid being recruited by the ZANLA forces through call-up in their rural areas. The situation was tense as men were targets to either group.⁹⁰ The interviewee also explained that men were also targeted by the white colonial forces as they were referred to as rebels and sellouts who supported the activities of liberation war fighters who fought in the armed struggle to liberate the present day Zimbabwe,

⁸⁹*Interview* with woman about the providing role of women in the Protected Villages in Mutema during the war, 21/09/2015.

⁹⁰*Interview* with woman from Mudzimwa, about the flexibility of women and their importance in the armed struggle, 20/09/2015.

thus men were limited to help to sustain the liberation war effort in the rural areas in Chipinge West community.⁹¹ Fay Chung in an interview with Ranchod Nilsson pointed out that, “The role of women was very important through practical reasons, rather than through ideological reasons. Smith was after men... so women could move without suspicion and these women can be in this business and they can risk their lives, what about the men? You know, it’s the male chauvinism coming out”.⁹²

Economically, the peasant women in Chipinge West constituency supported the liberation war effort through dominating agricultural field activities in the war period. They claimed land from the white settlers by seeking help from the ZANLA forces to remove the white farmers. Women dominated fertile lands where they controlled and grew indigenous crops, drought resistant crops such as rapoko, mhunga, mungoza, chidhoriyana, mafunde, and chidhumeni. This is because Chipinge West is a drought prone area, and hence this forced women to grow drought resistant crops. Women also played an important socio-economic role. They brewed beer that was used during the ritual ceremonies held to please the ancestors who were believed to be of great assistance in control of the war and providing intelligence information to the liberation war fighters in order to defeat the enemy. One elderly woman in an interview said:

Being the reason that men had departed to work sometimes because they were not interested

in joining the war fighting forces, Women became problematic as they complained so that land

⁹¹*Ibid*, 20/09/2015.

⁹²*Interview* with Fay Chung, then Minister of Education: In Ranchod Nilsson, *Gender Politics and Pendulum of Political and Social Transformation in Zimbabwe*, Denison University, Routledge, Taylor and Francis Ltd Group: *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol Number 2, page 53.

could be taken from the white settlers in the local farm lands of Matsikidzi and Madzadza so that women would be in a position to cultivate food crops to sustain their families and most important to feed the comrades (ZANLA forces) during the war. We grew finger millet rapoko and mhunga which we were using for brewing beer that the rural people could drink during the rituals held to please the ancestors so that fighters in the bush could be able to defeat the enemy.⁹³

The livelihoods activities carried by the rural adult women such as agriculture had a great impact on the triumph or victory of the war of liberation since farming enabled the rural women to support and feed the liberation war fighters. In Zimbabwe women in general became patriotic to their domestic duties in order to sustain the liberation war effort from 1966 -79. Land became a major issue to women who lived in the rural areas of Chipinge West community during the war period since it could make women respectable individuals and enjoy their powers as mothers who could improve the survival of their families at community level as well as the survival of everyone at societal level through the land use in order to acquire nutritious foods to feed the liberation war fighters.

During the armed struggle rural women's duties were performed concurrently with their normal domestic duties which put a strain on women. Thus, it was rural women's natural role to support the armed struggle as they attended to domestic tasks and at the same time put more effort in assisting the liberation fighters. Yuval-Davies posits that, 'Rural women, 'the mothers of the nation', represented the suffering and strength of rural people. These powerful images of women

⁹³Interview with elderly woman about women and the role of land in the war, 21/09/2015.

in the liberation war are all common aspects of the often contradictory ways in which women typically represent the nation in nationalistic movements'.⁹⁴ It is important to note that rural women's roles remained significant throughout the period of the armed struggle and they managed to support and to sustain the liberation war effort in Chipinge West constituency. In an interview with Ranchod Nilsson in Wedza district, one woman said, 'We must honour women because they are our mothers. If we don't hold women well, we will never win the war'.⁹⁵ This indicated that motherhood was a major role occupied women in the armed struggle in general. This also explains that if it happens that women were absent or did not participate in their roles which they fulfilled in the armed struggle, men alone, to a larger extent, would have fought a losing battle in the armed struggle.

The role played by the women in Chipinge West constituency remained significant throughout the war period. Women consolidated the armed struggle by their fearless support of the liberation war fighters hence the positions they occupied in the armed struggle should be recognised and upheld throughout the history of Zimbabwe's liberation struggle. A woman interviewed in Musani, said, 'Women are greater than men because we are mothers who always stand up and serve the nation in difficult times. Where men cannot appear we appear. For example, we managed to assist, to feed and above all to protect the liberation war fighters in overthrowing Smith regime'.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ N. Yuval-Davies and F. Anthias (eds), *Women-Nation-State*, New York, St Martin's Press, 1989, pages 23-33.

⁹⁵ Interview with woman in Wedza: In Ranchod Nilsson, *Gender Politics and Pendulum of Political and Social Transformation in Zimbabwe*, Denison University, Routledge 1989, pp. 53-7.

⁹⁶ Interview with woman in Musani, about the role of women as mothers in the armed struggle in Chipinge West, 25/09/2015.

In addition, Staunton in her interviews with some women in Eritrea and Zimbabwe, made her to conclude that women were involved in the struggle in a variety of ways that extended far beyond the associated duties of motherhood.⁹⁷ One respondent in an interview with Staunton maintains, “The comrades would have not been able to fire a gun if they hadn’t been fed”, “We cooked for them, washed their clothes and even protected them because it was we who gave them information about the security forces”.⁹⁸

Women supported and maintained cordial relationships with the freedom fighters in the armed struggle. This inspired youths or young women and girls who joined the struggle and equally contributed as their adults. The study established that the adult rural women had reasons to support the liberation war fighters.

One of the major reasons for their (women) support was that, the liberation war fighters supported the peasant agenda through their involvement in solving domestic women’s local social problems such as forced marriages and unexpected divorce amongst many domestic issues prior to the period of the armed struggle which contributed to the suffering of women in Chipinge West constituency. The next section will illustrate the roles played by the young women or middle teenage girls to support the national liberation war in Chipinge West constituency between 1974-9.

⁹⁷ I Staunton, *Mothers of the Revolution*, Bloomington, Indiana, Indiana University Press, 1990. Pages 22-9

⁹⁸ *Interview* with woman: In Staunton, *Mothers of the Revolution*, Bloomington, Indiana, Indiana University Press, 1990. pages 37-9.

2.2. Young women and their sustenance of the liberation war effort

The study clearly shows that young women in Chipinge West constituency, like anywhere else in Zimbabwe, played important roles during the armed struggle. Young women and teenage girls occupied a certain category as *chimbwidos* during the armed struggle and they had very different roles to play and to a larger extent they had very different war experiences from their adults. *Chimbwidos* were generally viewed as separate from their elders and parents by the local liberation war fighters. The young women and girls who acted as equals to their male youth counterparts or *mujibas* (boys), had the major role to act as messengers or communication agents among the civilian population. Ranchod Nilsson argues that, “The youth acted as liaisons among the civilian population and the combatants as well as among groups of combatants in a particular area. The *chimbwidos* served in the armed struggle as the eyes and ears of the ZANLA combatants”.⁹⁹ This explains that young women during the armed struggle supported the war as binding or thickening agents of the armed struggle during this period. One woman who experienced the armed struggle as one of *chimbwidos* who lives in Samhutsa area stressed the relevance of youths or *chimbwidos* when she said, ‘If it was that there was no or few *chimbwidos* in the armed struggle, the mobilisation process and organisation of the war would be, to a larger extent difficult to defeat the enemy in the area. Winning the war was going to be difficult because the area was heavily infiltrated by the Rhodesian Forces because its terrain was favoured by the liberation war fighters and it was an operational and a transit zone at the same time’.¹⁰⁰ She said that the youths or the *chimbwidos* should be valued equally to the trained youths or armed combatants because they played significant roles such as intelligentsias who showed

⁹⁹Sita Ranchod- Nilsson, *Gender Politics and Pendulum of Political and Social Transformation in Zimbabwe*, Denison University Press, Routledge, 1990. Pp.53-9.

¹⁰⁰*Interview* with woman in Samhutsa, about the role of women as war mobilisers and the value of *chimbwidos* in the armed struggle, 23/09/2015.

commitment to serve both the civilian population and armed combatants in the armed struggle in this community.¹⁰¹ Ranchod- Nilsson pointed out that the chimbwidos were responsible for doing many domestic duties and as much to the dismay of their parents lived with the combatants at their rural bases.¹⁰²

The study concludes that the success of the armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency should be credited to the support young women contributed to sustain the liberation war effort between 1974-79 when the country of Zimbabwe was at her pick to fight the Rhodesian Security Forces (Smith and British colonial forces). It is important to note that the above analysis indicated the participation of rural adult peasant women as well as the contribution of young women. The analysis of the roles carried by rural peasant women revealed through oral testimonies in this chapter that these roles were significant for the success of the armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency. The study exhausted the major tasks organised by the rural women in support of the armed struggle.

In the next chapter, the study will explore women as victims of the armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency. Victimisation of rural women by auxiliaries' which include rape, torture, violence, forced disappearance, bitterness, harassment, killings, witch crafting will be demonstrated in the next chapter. The study will also highlighted coping strategies or solutions

¹⁰¹*Ibid*, 23/09/2015.

¹⁰²Sita Ranchod- Nilsson, *Gender Politics and Pendulum of Political and Social Transformation in Zimbabwe*, Denison University Press, Routledge, 1990, pp.53-9.

used by women to reduce further victimization. Major reasons for further victimization of both elderly and young rural women in the armed struggle remain a significant part that will be explained fully in the next chapter. The victimisation of civilian women in the armed struggle by the newly formed RENAMO from Mozambique and other political parties and rebels will be further analysed in the next chapter. The final question to be answered in the next chapter is, how some of the militia groups in the armed struggle intensified the victimization of women as shall be manifested in the following sections. The chapter will explore socio-cultural, economic and political effects of the armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency.

CHAPTER THREE

WOMEN IN THE ARMED STRUGGLE IN CHIPINGE WEST CONSTITUENCY

Introduction

The main objective of this chapter is to explore on women in the armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency. This will highlight their relationship with the freedom fighters. It will also demonstrate the importance of the Second Chimurenga propaganda and its influence to the masses. The First Chimurenga and its contribution to the Second Chimurenga will be part and parcel of this chapter. This will include the oppression perpetrated by the white regime in the colonial period. The chapter will illustrate the ways used by the whites to dehumanise the black employees in mines and farms and show how this impacted on blacks. The chapter will also demonstrate women as victims of the armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency. This will also discuss risky roles played by women in the armed struggle. For example, motherhood, working in the fields, providing for fighters and woman as spirit media. The chapter will discuss women victimisation by the opposition political parties such as RNM from Mozambique and rebel groups such as Chimwenje in order to gain support from the rural women. The chapter will indicate all forms of victimisation used against women in the armed struggle such as rape, sexual harassment and beatings and how this affected women in Chipinge West constituency. The chapter will also discuss the events of ceasefire and how women were further victimised towards the end of the war in 1979. The chapter will also unearth the effects of the armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency. This will also explain the socio-economic, political and cultural impact of the armed struggle on women in Chipinge West constituency.

3.1. The relationship between women and freedom fighters

The relationship between rural women and the liberation war fighters during the armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency can be traced back to the rules and conduct of the liberation war fighters. The study established that the liberation war fighters were trained to be highly disciplined in their interaction with the masses. The claims that during the armed struggle women were victimised by liberation war fighters remain controversial since this study could not substantiate them. The interviews held by the researcher with women respondents indicated that although women could have been victimised during the armed struggle, most women interviewed denied claims that they were either victimised or abused by liberation war fighters whom they said were highly principled and disciplined. For example, in an interview Mbuya Mubvakwadziya, maintained that:

Atingarambi kuti zvekuti anhu kadzi akabatwa chibharo kana kushungurudzwa
ngema komuredhi zvakaitika muhondo. Kushungurudzwa kupondwa, kuuraiwa
kwevanhu kwaitoitika kana paine zvainge zvaitika. Kureketa kunode kuti vanhu
vazive kuti varwi vehondo ava vaive nechinangwa. Makomuredhi aiteedzere
mitemo iri mubhaibhiri raMwari pahondo. Vainga vasina nguva yekuponda
kuba, ufeve, kana kutandara nemadzimai.¹⁰³

This can be literally translated to say

We cannot discard the idea that women were raped or abused by the liberation war fighters. Harassment, beatings, and killings of people could take place if there was something that would

¹⁰³Interview with Mbuya Mubvakwadziya, Musani, Bamhamire Village, on 22/09/2015.

have happened. People must understand that freedom fighters had an objective. The freedom fighters followed the Ten Commandments in the bible during the armed struggle. They did not have time to kill civilians, commit adultery or even to entertain women.

This explains that freedom fighters were not after victimising women in any form. Instead, there were people who were taking advantage of the war situation to pursue their ulterior motives which they wanted blamed on the freedom fighters. The fact that women are biologically weak resulted in their victimisation during the armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency. But this was not by the freedom fighters but by other elements like unscrupulous male war collaborators, rebel forces such as Chimwenje, RENAMO (Resistencia Nacional Mocambicana), and ZANU Ndonga. Nevertheless, the victims of abuse were usually young women who failed to maintain their cultural values during the armed struggle which exposed them to the danger of rape and numerous other problems associated with the war. One woman who experienced the war while living in Musani during the armed struggle said, 'In the war, those young women who did not respect their traditional cultural values and lacked discipline exposed themselves to several problems such as rape, torture, harassment, killings, and forced displacement amongst many. This was generally perpetrated by the same rebel groups mentioned above. The freedom fighters co-existed peacefully with 'everyone'. However, in the process, some freedom fighters violated the principles of the revolution. Hence the cases of women being raped, tortured or harassed and abused were contextual and depended on circumstances or situation. For instance, if one was suspected of selling out, he/she would be liable for a severe punishment or even death.

Furthermore, the relationship between the rural women and the liberation fighters was cordial in general. The liberation war fighters tried to maintain peace and tranquility in Chipinge West constituency during the armed struggle. It must be noted that sometimes the violation of liberation war principles was initiated by unbecoming conduct of some members of the public. The circumstances which led the liberation war fighters to violate principles of the revolution and conduct were that while they were trying to engage into peace and harmony, they found many people with problems of existing disputes such as witch crafting. While it was not part of their direct mandate, the freedom fighters intervened to solve such local disputes. In an interview, Mbuya Matangi said, '*Makomuredhi vaka pedza matambudziko ainetsa hondo isati yauya akaita seuroyi. Vaka hunyaradza uroyi mundau muno*'.¹⁰⁴ This had to say that the liberation war fighters were successfully able to finish the problems that existed before the war. They silenced witch crafting in this community. The study already explained in chapter one of this study that witch crafting is a common practice in the Ndaу traditional society. The liberation war fighters often threatened those suspected of upholding this practice. The reason was that they wanted to make sure that everyone was free from any socio-cultural problems that threatened human freedom so that people focused attention on supporting the war of liberation. Ranchod pointed that combatants support for rural women was so consistent that there were often special relations between women and the liberation forces. Household outhits involving lack of financial support from their husbands, domestic abuse, and jealousy over girlfriends and unwanted divorces became central to the guerrilla struggle in this community. In their intervention, the

¹⁰⁴ Interview with Mbuya Matangi, Samhutsa, Chichichi Village, on 24/09/2015.

combatants were most often sympathetic to women and a number of these conflicts were solved publicly at *pungwes*, or night-time mobilisation sessions.¹⁰⁵

In an interview with female respondent, she confessed that, she was beaten thoroughly by the liberation war fighters because she was reported to them that she was a witch doctor.¹⁰⁶ She was also possessed with ancestral spirit which made her to kill many of her next doors. She was happen to said that she was beaten under the foot, on the forehead and at her back with a shambock.¹⁰⁷ It is important to note that she even showed permanent scars on her back to the interviewer. It has to be highlighted that while all such circumstances took place, it was not mandated for the liberation fighters to abuse the civilians. The harassment, abuse, torturing and beating of civilians by the liberation fighters was a seriously punishable offence which was not permissible, unless the situation compelled them to do so. Mr Mashapa pointed out the fact that they ate, play, organise or made jokes with the liberation war fighters if the time permitted during the public mass meetings.¹⁰⁸

During the liberation war operations, the liberation war fighters depended on the civilian population who provided them with all forms of support including food such as sadza, clothes, other goods and many important services (laundry) in order to sustain the liberation war effort. The importance of cooperation, support and positive relationship between the liberation war

¹⁰⁵S. Ranchod-Nilsson, "Gender Politics and the Pendulum of Political and Social Transformation in Zimbabwe: Women and the Politics of Gender in Southern," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 1, 2006; pp. 56-64.

¹⁰⁶Interview with Mbuya Mwachepura, Samhutsa, Nduku Village, on 24/09/2015.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid*, 24/09/2015.

¹⁰⁸Interview with Mr Mashapa, Chipote, Bamhamire Village, on 24/09/2015.

fighters and the masses was explained in chapter two which discussed the roles of rural women in support and sustenance of the liberation struggle in Chipinge West constituency. In an interview with Mbuya Marwendo, who experienced the armed struggle, and who lives in Tanganda Village of Chief Mutema explained that, *Vairwa hondo vaka gadzira ukama hwaka naka nemadzimai kuma ruwa. Unhu hwavo hwai kombe kuti vaka pangwa yekutevedza nekuti vai nzwisisa kuti vava kagara navo ndivo vane nduramo yavo uye vai dzidzisa madzimai kukurudzire kurwiwa kwehondo muma ruwa kwete kuti varwi vave vavengi.*¹⁰⁹ This means that the liberation war fighters cultivated a good relationship with rural women. The liberation war fighters' behaviour was a reflection of their guiding principles because they understood that their lives were within the people and they mobilised women in the rural areas to gain support rather than make them their enemies.

In return, women in Chipinge West community enjoyed some favour and help from the liberation war fighters. Most interviewees claimed that there were many benefits that were brought by freedom fighters in Chipinge West constituency because their presence in the armed struggle brought many changes to the liberation of rural peasant women. The women interviewees emphasised that marriage problems were rampant, male dominance and female subordination as well as marginalisation by their husbands was the order of the day. Mrs Mahombi pointed out that, *'Varume vai shupa, kushungurudza nekurambidza vakadzi kodzero dzavo vai garwa matare ekudzoreredzwa kana kupihwa zvirango nevarwi verusununguko'*.¹¹⁰ This is to say that, men who abused, harassed and deprived women of their rights were counseled and/or punished by the liberation war fighters. In this case peasant women in Chipinge West

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Mbuya Marwendo, Tanganda, Marwendo Village, on 24/09/25.

¹¹⁰ Interview with Mrs. Mahombi, Nyamhara, Hwapera Village, on 24/09/2015.

constituency claimed, during the interviews, that the armed struggle brought upon them some tangible benefits even before the ceasefire in 1979. Despite the many difficulties that they suffered or experienced women praised the significant role played by freedom fighters in the emancipation of rural peasant women from the dominance of male patriarchal society. This explains that the relationship between rural peasant women and liberation war fighters was cordial and peaceful. Ranchod-Nilsson through the study confined in Wedza district maintained that combatants support for rural women was so consistent and that there often special relations between women and the liberation forces. Household conflicts involving lack of financial support from their husbands, domestic abuse, and jealousy over girlfriends and unwanted divorces became central to the guerrilla struggle in this community. In their intervention, the combatants were most often sympathetic to women and a number of these conflicts were solved publicly at pungwes or night-time mobilisation sessions.¹¹¹

The relationship that was established, during the armed struggle, between the rural peasant women in Chipinge West constituency and the liberation war fighters was generally conducive for its purpose. Rebels and other people who tried to abuse or oppress these women in any form suffered a fatal blow as these women were not only protected but defended vehemently by the liberation war fighters. One woman from Mutema village commented that many people who resisted the agenda of the liberation struggle by attempting to oppress women to prevent them from supporting the revolution exposed themselves to painful punishment such as beatings, severe torture, or death, amongst many other forms of punishment often applied by the liberation

¹¹¹ S. Ranchod-Nilsson, "Gender Politics and the Pendulum of Political and Social Transformation in Zimbabwe: Women and the Politics of Gender in Southern," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 1, 2006; pp. 56-64.

war fighters.¹¹² She went on to explain that in her community the liberation war fighters never killed anyone but they sometimes assigned war collaborators (*vana mujibha*) to apply such punishments on their behalf.¹¹³ The study established that while these unfortunate incidences took place, it is very important to understand that the objectives of the armed struggle were never to subject civilians to any form of suffering but to work with them in a symbiotic manner. Their agenda was to collaborate with the masses so that they (freedom fighters) became integrated into the rural population for maximum and unwavering support and protection as they shared the same agenda of liberating the country and its entire people.

The behaviour of liberation war fighters was regulated by a set of principles or rules of conduct. The principles or rules of conduct shaped the behaviour and discipline of the liberation fighters. The study shows that the liberation fighters were supposed to introduce themselves to the masses through their presentation of the principles or rules of conduct of the war of liberation. This was because there were some people who pretended to be liberation fighters but they were enemies. In an interview with Mr. Manzou who experienced the armed struggle as a liberation war fighter under ZANLA forces, although operated in the battle field in other areas, other than Chipinge West constituency was able to give a list of the expected principles or rules of conduct in the revolutionary war in general. He said:

Freedom fighters would not kill civilians unless otherwise. They were supposed to respect the masses and not to harass them. Suspect members of the society were treated with justice. Freedom fighters were never allowed to engage in love affairs with women. They were not

¹¹²Interview with woman in Mutema, Mutema Village, on 25/09/2015.

¹¹³*Ibid*, 25/09/2015.

allowed to obtain by force from the masses. They fought for peace and harmony for everyone.¹¹⁴

The liberation war fighters were generally taught to make intact relationship within a society in order to create the avenues of trust, inspiration and transparency to the civilians and to gain the needed support in the war of liberation. One woman who experienced the armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency and played the role of *chimbwido* and moved from one Protected Village to another attending the night public mobilisation sessions almost every day, explained or attached the importance of the *pungwes* as a principle and both a strategy used by the liberation forces to build a strong relationship with the civilians in the armed struggle, she said, ‘Pungwe was a way of penetrating the masses access so that they could not be poisoned, reported to the whites by the masses’.¹¹⁵

The next part of this topic demonstrates the purpose of the Second *Chimurenga* propaganda in creating a collaborative relationship between the liberation war fighters and the rural population in Chipinge West constituency during the armed struggle. The Second *Chimurenga* propaganda addressed issues of the central themes of the war of liberation to the rural masses.

3.2. The importance of the Second Chimurenga propaganda and its influence to the (rural) masses.

The primary task of the liberation war fighters was to ‘educate’ the masses of the meaning and purpose of Chimurenga war. The liberation war fighters educated people about the reasons for

¹¹⁴Interview with Mr. Manzou, Mutema, Mudzimwa Village, on 25/09/2015.

¹¹⁵Interview with, Mrs. Mhlanga, Tanganda, Marwendo Village, Mrs Mhlanga, on 25/09/2015.

their mission into the country during the armed struggle. The reasons for starting the liberation war, the purpose for individual liberation war fighters to join the war and the reasons for carrying guns as well as who the enemy was were clearly explained to the masses during mass meetings or *pungwes* held at night. Mbuya Ngwende said, ‘The liberation war fighters would explain with great emphasis to the rural masses, their aims of fighting in the liberation war. When they explained during these mass gatherings [pungwes] everyone, especially the youths, would become so emotional that they volunteered to join the liberation war. Everyone felt that the war was harmful but there was a natural need to fight the war, to remove the oppressive forces of the colonial regime’.¹¹⁶ This inspired everyone to have the reason to believe in the same common cause with the freedom fighters in waging the armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency.

The initial central theme of the armed struggle was to educate the masses which was the major reason for mass gatherings under the camouflage of darkness at night. The mass gatherings were the fora of the mass education so that everyone understood and accepted the purpose and reasons for the liberation war. Mr. Basopo who fought in the war of liberation but from a different province said:

Taiti kana tatange kufundisa zvikonzero zvakaita kuti
tipinde muhondo munhu weshe wai batikana uye
munhu weshe papungwepo waito zwisise chinangwa
poto ite ukama hwakanaka munharaunda mwetinonga
tei shandiramwo. Yaa vanhu takabatana nawo mumana,

¹¹⁶Interview with Mbuya Ngwende, Musani, Bamhamire Village, on 25/09/2015.

toite chimwe chete nawo mupfungwa dzedu.¹¹⁷

This can be literally means that:

When we started to explain to people the reasons that triggered the war everyone felt deep emotional pain. These emotions helped to build strong solidarity between the freedom fighters and the general population. This in turn created strong relationships in communities where we operated. Yes, we became united with the people in the rural communities with a common agenda.

Mass education occurred in three forms. There were small group discussions or conversations held by one, two or three freedom fighters with a relatively large group of civilians either during the day or at night depending on prevailing security situation. This would happen during their rest period. At these fora, freedom fighters would further educate civilians of their social reality which were direct consequences of colonialism. It was a conscientisation process to orient civilians into the war of liberation. Civilians would ask questions that would be answered right there. At the end, participants would be socialised into the war process. Mr. Manyofa, who practically participated as a war collaborator said, ‘Three to five individuals could sit with one freedom fighter who would explain war principles until people understood the reasons for the emergence of the war of liberation and their compelling roles in the liberation war. Women were also allowed to attend these group discussions since they also were supposed to know so that they could participate effectively.’¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷Interview with Mr Basopo, Mutema, Mudzimwa Village, on 25/09/2015.

¹¹⁸Interview with Mr. Manyofa, Mutema Village, on 25/09/2015.

Another approach was public mass speeches by freedom fighters to huge crowds of civilians at mass gatherings during the night. In these speeches freedom fighters would explain their roles including disciplinary processes and procedures. They would explain what they were allowed to do and what they were not allowed to do as part of their operational ethics. For example, they were not allowed to terrorise civilians as they were their lifeblood. They also were not allowed to kill civilians since these were the very people they intended to liberate. On the other hand, freedom fighters would explain what civilians were expected to do as they participated in the war. Most important was an emphasis that every war comes with a multitude of problems. They would cite problems of hunger, starvation, arrests, imprisonment, torture, individual and mass killings, etc. But would continue to say “---- all these could be overcome if all of us became united, vigilant and sacrificial, to achieve our common goals. The purpose of the gun is to kill. So its either I kill or I am killed. And because you are all here with us, it means you can also die with us. That is war. Nevertheless, your welfare is our concern just as our welfare is also your concern. This is the agreement we are making here today. We all agreed that the liberation war is ‘our war’ hence its problems are ‘our problems’. Let us share responsibility.”¹¹⁹

The third method used by freedom fighters to educate civilians about the liberation war was through singing liberation war (Chimurenga) songs. These songs were so carefully composed that they all conveyed strong war messages which would strongly appeal to everyone present. These songs helped to inspire and stimulate high moral among the masses. The songs also helped to dispel fears of the inherent dangers embedded in the war operations. Songs were a form of entertainment. They would punctuate some very strong messages conveyed through speeches.

¹¹⁹*Interview* with a war veteran (refused to give her name), Liberation War Speeches during night-time public meetings, 22/09/2015.

Even as people left the gatherings, they continued to sing some of the songs they still remembered. This is how the war propaganda message spread to every corner of the country. This instilled the spirit of patriotism among all African communities. For urban dwellers who could not attend these gatherings, there was a radio broadcast operating from Mozambique. The same messages as were conveyed at mass gatherings were broadcast live from Mozambique. However, like mass gatherings, these were illegal broadcasts in Rhodesia. In an interview with one war veteran who experienced the war in Mt. Darwin sang one of the Chimurenga songs as follows, '*Mbuya Nehanda kufa vachitaura shuwa, kuti toitora sei nyika, shoko rimwe rava kandiudza tora gidi uzvitonge*'.¹²⁰ This means that, grandmother Nehanda died whilst advised us how to get back our land, she told myself to hold a gun and rule. These songs played an inspiring role for women to join the fighting forces and became patriotic to their roles to sustain the armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency and everywhere in Zimbabwe.

3.3. Colonialism as a cause for cooperation between freedom fighters and the masses.

Following the period of the armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency, the liberation war fighters boosted their relationship or inspiration to the public masses during the *pungwes* by explaining historical proceedings and eventful or practical experiences of colonialism to the masses. In an interview with Mrs. Mutanda who also experienced the war whilst living in New Year's Gift in Ward Two of Chipinge West constituency during the war period justified how the liberation war fighters interpreted the historical perspectives of colonialism to the masses to reach the heart of the civilian population in the armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency. In her words, Mrs. Mutanda said that:

¹²⁰ Interview with, war veteran, about the liberation war songs and education, Bamhamire, on 23/09/2015.

The liberation fighters inspired or persuaded the masses to support the agenda of the Revolution by interpreting the reasons for the colonization of Zimbabwe by the colonial masters, Rudd Concession and its terms was unearthed to the masses in the rural areas for the public to understand the extent of the evilness of the colonisers. The Pioneer Column movements was expressed until the settlers reached heart of what they named Fort Salisbury (now Harare). The role of missionaries was preached and how the Holy Bible was used to decolonise the African mind and washed away African Indigenous Knowledge Systems by colonial masters since the beginning of the nineteenth century remained the major areas used to prove anger towards their enemy. The Berlin Conference of 1884-5 where the Scramble and Partition of Africa and colonization began explained to the masses during the *pungwes* on several occasions'.¹²¹

It is important to note that, the liberation war fighters did all what they did because they knew that some people who were educated within the civilians would understand this and reacted positively by joining the armed forces or if they were happen to be rural peasant women then they easily became patriotic to domestic tasks that are required in the sustainance of the armed struggle.

3.4. The oppression perpetrated by the white regime.

The concept of land alienation became a major propaganda instrument used by the liberation war fighters to influence the masses during the *pungwes* in the armed struggle was a significant issue.

¹²¹*Interview* with Mrs. Mutanda, Samhutsa, Chichichi Village, on 26/09/2015.

On the issue of loss of land to the colonial masters and white settlers, the liberation war fighters talked of the Berlin Conference of 1884-5 and reminded people of the displacements of indigenous Africans from fertile land to semi-arid parts of the country where people were then congested. In a focus group discussion held with a group of women from Chipinge West constituency, many expressed the opinion that some people whose land was taken by the whites were still alive and in pain of the memory of how their land was appropriated by the colonialists.¹²² Thus when the liberation war fighters addressed the issue of land during the *pungwes* or public mass meetings, they wanted to revive people's memories and pain of loss so that they would appreciate and accept the cause for the war of liberation. Women in general understood better the issue of land alienation because they were already deprived of land rights long before the colonial period by the traditional patriarchal society that gave all land rights to men rather than women. Hence they believed and supported what the liberation war fighters talked about regarding land.

3.5. Women as (greater) victims in the armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency.

Women are biologically weak. The roles that peasant women naturally played in social life and in the armed struggle, in particular contributed much for women to become greater victims of the war situation. The respondents to this study emphasised that the roles played by peasant women in the armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency were a major cause for the greater suffering of women. The dynamic nature of women's roles and responsibility pre-exposed them to a lot of

¹²²Interview with women on a focus group in Chipote, Bamhamire Village, on 23/09/2015.

security problems. Traditionally, women were meant to stay at home while men went to find jobs in the farms, mines, factories, etc. Thus, everyone knew that those women were defenseless hence vulnerable. One woman from Mutema said as their husbands left homes and families to seek for jobs at some white owned farms for some time, women remained responsible for any problems facing their children and family.¹²³ Mrs. Magondo said, ‘All this could overburdened women and caused psychosocial problems such as stresses and depression all the time when they faced some challenges. The absence of males in the homes during the armed struggle period plunged many families into problems such as abject poverty and malnutrition which resulted in many deaths of young children and some women.’¹²⁴ However, on such occasions many women and their children relocated to safer places and find new ways of survival in form of coping strategies. In an interview with Mbuya Madziripi she said:

Pamukuwo wazotange hondo tai gara semhuri kwaChituuta. Zvisinei mhuri yedu yakazobva kwaita nzara. Panguwayo mwamuna wangu wai shandire Kwekwe. Ndakaona kuti vana vanga tambura ngeurombo nenzara pataigarapo. Ndakabve kwaChituuta kuende mundau yaMarwendo nevana vatainga navo. Ndakatange kurime muriwo mumvura wandai tengesere pamusika pamharadzano yemigwagwa unoende Chiredzi naTanganda kwakutange kugara zvakanaka nevana vangu kusvika pakapera mukupera kwakaita hondo. Zviro inga zvakaema kushata asi takarwisa.¹²⁵

This is translated to say:

¹²³ Interview with woman, about women as victims of the armed struggle, Mutema, Mutema Village, 25/09/2015.

¹²⁴ Interview with Mrs. Magondo, Mutema, Mutema Village, on 25/09/2015.

¹²⁵ Interview with Mbuya Madziripi, about women as victims and their survival means when face challenges, Mutema, Hwapera Village, on 25/09/2015.

In the beginning of the war we lived together as a family in Chituuta. However, our family left the area when there was drought, whilst my husband went to Kwekwe to seek employment during the war. I discovered that our children would suffer from abject poverty therefore, I moved from Chituuta to Marwendo village with our children. I started to cultivate vegetables along the river bank and always sold them at Tanganda-Chiredzi bus terminus and then began to live a stable life with my children until the end of the war. The situation was generally difficult but we managed to survive.

This reveals that the roles of women at family level showed that women have got better relationships than men, therefore women would risk themselves for betterment, security or protection of everyone in a society. Men can easily run away therefore women would be greater victims. As it is indicated in the above account, it shows that women found it difficult to run away from danger, poverty and any other risky events like the armed struggle, they must remain responsible to look after children. The study established that as women were domesticated by their husbands. The armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency overburdened women in the rural areas. Women had to work in the fields and to carry out male oriented duties at home in the absence of their husbands. Therefore, sometimes women relocated to new areas as a coping strategy in order to escape from danger or harm as the above interviewee indicated in her account. The study established that women in Chipinge West constituency remained the most suffering group. They suffered economically, socially, politically and culturally. It was natural for the women to suffer the way they suffered in the armed struggle as the study reveals.

3.6. Risky roles of women

Women played risky roles in the armed struggle. These roles were very important for the development of the war but they make that women would experience many problems at the same time. Women played risky roles such as role of motherhood, providing for freedom fighters and women as spirit mediums. Working in the fields also exposed women to danger or harm as the study will discussed below.

3.6.1. Women as mothers

The problems faced by the general population of women in Chipinge West constituency during the armed struggle can be traced back to the compelling roles of women which they could not be separated from, for instance, the role of women as mothers. As mothers, women's responsibilities were to act as shields against danger or any form of harm to their children or families. One female respondent of Samhutsa presented her story in an interview as follows:

One day the Rhodesian Forces mounted our home suspecting that we had accommodated the liberation war fighters that night. My husband escaped and disappeared into a nearby bushy area at our home. I did not disappear myself the way my husband did because I could not leave my children. They needed my protection as a mother. Within a few minutes after Godfrey (husband) ran away, the door was banged with something that sounded like a hard object which made huge noise. I responded to the knock by moving towards the door and slowly opened while shivering. When I opened the door I saw two Rhodesian soldiers. They pulled me out with force from the house, then asked, "Where is your husband?" I answered confidently, but lied, "I am a widow". One of them slapped me in the face and I fell down. They went away. In the following morning I collected very few staff of our property,

accompanied by my children, Tendai (a boy) and Tikibwa (a girl) and went to my grandmother in Kondo. I spend three days there and I then risked coming back walking at night.¹²⁶

The foregoing account shows that in a war situation, women as mothers would never leave their children in danger in most cases. In many difficult occasions during the armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency lying was a key survival skill used to escape harm or even deaths. Mothers provided protection and security at family level during the absence of their husbands. Motherhood comes with roles such as nurturing children, cooking for them, looking after the sick and the injured at community level.

3.6.2 Working in the fields

Roles such as agricultural activities in the fields also impacted negatively on women and children during the armed struggle. The study established that women were responsible for cultivating fields where they grew food for their families and the liberation war fighters. It is this time of going to the fields that they normally would encounter problems. For example, Mbuya Gorekai recounted that one day she went to her field to do some weeding. On her way she met the Rhodesian Forces who accused her of conveying messages to the liberation war fighters concerning the movements of the Rhodesian soldiers around that place. When she denied ever doing that she was taken on to a mountain called Chinyiinyii. She was beaten until she fainted and left for dead. She was discovered by some herd boys who then helped her home. She said if

¹²⁶ *Interview* with Mbuya Handina, Samhutsa, Nduku Village, on 26/09/2015.

she did not go to the fields she would not have encountered this nasty incident.¹²⁷ Therefore, some of the roles that women had to fulfill exposed them to numerous risks.

3.6.3. Providing for freedom fighters

Women naturally were responsible for logistical requirements of the freedom fighters once they came into the area. They would ensure that they got quality food to eat, some water to bath, their clothes were clean, etc. These were duties particularly performed by female war collaborators (*vana chimbwido*), but with the assistance of elderly women. The process of doing all this required a certain level of vigilance as there was high possibilities of being trapped by some enemy agents who were also members of the community. If this happened, information regarding the freedom fighters' whereabouts would be conveyed to the Rhodesian forces who would respond quickly by sending both war planes and ground force to attack spotted positions. It is during these occasions that women were so exposed to the risk of being captured, injured or killed as Rhodesian forces attacked freedom fighters' positions. Unfortunately this responsibility could not be alienated as it was a welfare issue which could only be properly undertaken by women.

When interviewed on this issue, Mbuya Chipokore indicated that when carrying food to the liberation war fighters, anything could happen. Sometimes the Rhodesian forces or their agents traced the movements of women as they went with food to the liberation war fighters. When they spotted the positions of the freedom fighters, reports would be made and eventually battles would be fought or freedom fighter positions would be bombed. This means that the task was

¹²⁷*Interview* with Mbuya Gorekai, Mutema, Bamhamire Village, on 26/09/2015.

risky. But since it could not be avoided women would carry food in some water buckets and pose as if they were going to fetch some water.¹²⁸ This became a potentially practical coping strategy.

3.6.4 Women as spirit media

The role of women as spirit media was very important as they helped the liberation war fighters with divine information regarding the movements of the Rhodesian forces and operational strategies. Spirit mediums are generally respected in every African society, especially in Zimbabwe since they are known to have divine powers. And because their powers are common knowledge they were always suspect to the Rhodesian forces. This suspicion put them at risk. They faced a lot of challenges. Mbuya Jangwa, a spirit medium in Chipinge West commended, *‘Masvikiro aiuraiwa kana akorere kureketa kana kutsanangura nekubudisa umbowo pane zvinonga zvisina kunzwisise vanhu kana varungu pane zvainge zvaitika kunyanya pataigare muwaya kwaMutema muna 1976’*.¹²⁹ This is to say, spirit mediums were killed once they failed to interpret or give supportive evidence when consulted on issues that were considered problems war related. They were at risk from either side. If they told Rhodesian forces anything, freedom fighters felt betrayed. And if they gave maneuvering advice to freedom fighters, the Rhodesian forces would sometimes know through their secret agents. They would also accuse the spirit media for exposing them. Often the penalty would be death. This explains that killings were rampant in the armed struggle.

In a similar incident, for example, Mrs. Madhaure highlighted in an interview that Mbuya Mutsvairo, a spirit medium, was killed after failing to explain how a certain white soldier was

¹²⁸Interview with Mbuya Chipokore, Mutema, Bamhamire Village, on 26/09/2015.

¹²⁹Interview with Mbuya Jangwa, about victimisation of women spirit mediums, Mutema, Hwapera Village, on 27/09/2015.

found dead outside the fence of Mutema Protected Village.¹³⁰ She further explained that everyone was called to witness her murder, possibly to instill fear to other spirit media.¹³¹

4.0 Women Abuses in the Armed Struggle

4.1 Women victimised through the activities of opposition political parties and rebels

The study already established that women were victimised by other groups, other than the liberation war fighters. The study revealed that women in Chipinge West constituency were victimised by the auxiliaries such as the newly reformed opposition party of RENAMO (Resistencia Nacional Mocambicana) and some rebel groups such as Chimwenje in Zimbabwe. ZANU Ndonga of Ndabaningi was also found exploited and oppressed rural women in Chipinge West constituency to gain support in the armed struggle. RENAMO and Chimwenje victimised women in all forms of abuse such as rape, beatings and sexual harassment was also rampant.

4.2 Women witnessed rape

Rape was used by the Rhodesian Forces as a form of punishment to female individuals who were found still continue to convey information about the whereabouts of the movements of Smith's soldiers. In an interview with a woman who her daughter experienced rape in Samhutsa before they were settled into protected village said, '*Mwanasikana wangu waka batwa chibharo munjira padhibhi paRumuramwana. Wanga achimanikidzwa kuti atende kuti ndichimbwido iye echiramba*'.¹³² This had this to say, my first daughter was raped as she was forced to accept that she was a messenger while she was refused. This happened on a path at Rumuramwana dip tank.

¹³⁰Interview with Mbuya Madhaure, about victimisation of women spirit mediums, Mutema, Mudzimwa Village, on 27/09/2015.

³²*Ibid*, 27/09/2015.

¹³²Interview with elderly woman, about woman and rape, Samhutsa, Nduku Village, on 27/09/2015.

This traumatised the minds of the victim. These experiences had psychological problems on the victims. Mazambani pointed out in his publication that rape was also used as a weapon by white regime to stop women from supporting the guerrillas. One woman, 75-85 years old strengthened that rape cases remained a top war secret and women were silenced and there was nowhere to report such cases in war situation.¹³³

Sexual harassment was also rampant during the armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency. The study indicate that women were sexually harassed in the Protected Villages of Mutema, Musani and Manesa. One woman who experienced sexual harassment by the guards in the protected village at Mutema said, '*Magadhi acho muma khipi vaiti secha peshe. Magadhi vaiye varume asi ndivo vai secha chero vakadzi vevanhu vai sechwa varume vavo varipo. Ukaramba kwaiye kurohwa chete. Vai bata chero mazamu kana mudumbu mwemadzima*'.¹³⁴ This can be translated to say, the guards in the protected villages they searched us all over the body parts. The guards were usually men but they searched even other men's wives whilst their husbands were present. If you refused you would be beaten. They even pulled women's breasts and touched stomach of women. The situation that women were sexually harassed in the armed struggle was also revealed with the same experiences of women in Chiweshe district where women recounted that they were harassed sexually in the Protected Villages by the District Assistants. In an interview with Mike Kesby, one female respondent recounted:

'The young African guards took advantage of official disinterest. Villagers recounted that while men

¹³³I. Mazambani, *Plight of Manufactured Female Detenees and Restricttees in Southern Rhodesia*, Interview with Shambare: *In Themes in Contemporary History of Zimbabwe: Emergency Perspectives in Afrikology* (eds) V. Z. Nyawo-Shava Gweru: Mambo Press, 2013, page 50.

¹³⁴Interview with woman, about sexual harassment, Mutema, Bwerudza Village, Ward Five on 27/09/2015.

were efficiently searched when entering or leaving the village gates, the handling of women's bodies was laboured, 'The soldiers enjoyed the searching, they did it with lustful eyes. They would feel the line of beads worn around the tummy for sex appeal'.¹³⁵

This also dehumanised, traumatised memories and caused psychological injuries to victims. In an interview in Mazambani's *Plight of Manufactured Female Detenees and Restricttees in Southern Rhodesia*, Shambare who was considered a chimbwidos and politically detained said:

Our breasts were pulled, many women were forced to have intercourse with the prison warders. At times female detainees were gang-raped at police stations. Anyone who attempted to refuse was severely punished.¹³⁶

This explains that in the armed struggle women were beaten, raped and sexually harassed on several occasions. This also shows that sexual harassment was rampant during the war of liberation in Zimbabwe. The study revealed that women were harassed by the RENAMO (headed by Alfonso Dhlakama) from Mozambique, ZANU-Ndonga (headed by Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole) and *Chimwenje*(headed by Ndabaningi Sithole and led by the shadow leader- Simba Mhlanga) rebel groups in order to gain support from the rural women around Chimanimani and Chipinge. In one interview in Matikiti's *Thesis*, it was given that Chimwenje

¹³⁵M. Kesby, Interview with Joy,, Chiweshe District, Arenas for Control, Terrains of Gender Contestation: Guerrilla Struggle and Counter-Insurgency Welfare in Zimbabwe 1972-1980, Journal of Southern African Studies, Vol. 22, No. 4, Taylor Francis, Ltd, 1996, pp.561-584.

¹³⁶I. Mazambani, *Plight of Manufactured Female Detenees and Restricttees in Southern Rhodesia*, Interview with female Detainee in prison: *In Themes in Contemporary History of Zimbabwe: Emergency Perspectives in Afrikology* (eds) V. Z. Nyawo-Shava Gweru: Mambo Press, 2013, page 50.

atrocities took place during the height of RENAMO war with the result that they were hardly recognisable.¹³⁷ Sigauke maintained that Sithole's farms were deemed economic base which backed his political activities. So it could have been in the interest of Zanu-PF to hit at that economic base if Sithole was to be silenced politically.¹³⁸

4.3. Women witnessed beatings

The research found that beatings were rampant in the Protected Villages in the armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency. *The Daily News* on 20 December, 2000 published that *Chimwenje* owned military bases in Chimanimani. The notorious *Chimwenje* rebel group operated in the Eastern border areas of Zimbabwe. It was difficult to attribute heinous crimes such as murder, rape and kidnapping to *Chimwenje* because RENAMO was operating in the same area and guilty of the same crimes.¹³⁹ The multiple of atrocities initiated by RENAMO rebels (Matsangas) in the Eastern border areas impacted negatively on women in Chipinge district in general and Chipinge West constituency in particular. It has been argued that there is ethnic affinity between the people who live in Chipinge area on the Zimbabwean side of the border with those of the RENAMO rebels. It of paramount importance to note inhere that Dhlakama Alfonso and Ndabaningi Sithole and their supporters belonged to same Ndaus in Zimbabwe-Mozambique border areas.

¹³⁷ R. Matikiti, *Christian Theological Perspectives on Political Violence in Zimbabwe: The Case of The United Church of Christ in Zimbabwe*, Thesis Submitted to The Department of Religious Studies, Classics and Philosophy, University of Zimbabwe, Harare, 2012, page.263.

¹³⁸ O. Sigauke, *Op. cit*, page. 47.

¹³⁹ *The Daily News*, 20 December 2000.

The study established that the problems of *Chimwenje* were emerged in the same period of wars started with RNM since they were both suffered some difficulties to be appreciated or recognised. The fact that *Chimwenje* was hardly recognisable caused them to engage into violence in order to gain support from the rural women in the area. Mrs. Mwachepura in an interview said that women were thoroughly beaten if they failed to be patriotic to their domestic duties or suspected to be sellouts. One female respondent who witnessed beatings in the armed struggle in Samhutsa said, 'Sinikiwe was beaten and sent to the Highlands where she was found dead after a week or so. She was accused of being fall in love with one of the well-known rebels of *Chimwenje* rebel group in 1979'.¹⁴⁰ It is essential to mention that these experiences had impacted negatively to such victims. Relatives of those who were victimised left with traumatised minds. This resulted in permanent scars and permanent physical injuries. Staunton maintains that the situation was particularly tense in areas with government created Protected Villages where, contrary to providing protection for rural people, women exploited for sex and domestic services by their guards.¹⁴¹

5.4. Further victimisation of women during Ceasefire

The study also found little evidence that women were victimised by the liberation war fighters before the ceasefire but the study established that the situation became tense in 1979, when there was ceasefire or when the war was about to end. This was like that because the new recruits who joined the liberation forces were ill-trained and undisciplined. Hence they violated the principles of the revolution or the armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency. Many women who were

¹⁴⁰Interview with woman about women and beatings, Samhutsa, Chichichi Village, on 27/09/2015.

¹⁴¹I. Staunton, *Mothers of the Revolution*, Bloomington, Indiana, Indiana University Press, 1990, page.

interviewed on this issue in this study explained that the liberation war fighters who joined the war of liberation towards ceasefire were ruthless and cruel than their counterparts who joined in the beginning of the war.¹⁴² Krieger pointed out that those who re-entered the country after that time did not have as much training as their counterparts who had been trained earlier. Consequently, discipline in the ranks broke down. Inside Zimbabwe, relations between combatants and rural people suffered as untrained and undisciplined combatants too often terrorised rural villages in order to gain support.¹⁴³

5.0. Effects of the armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency.

The effects of the armed on cultural and traditional perspectives will be explored. The section will illustrate economic, social, political impact of the armed struggle on women in Chipinge West constituency.

5.1. Impact of the armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency on culture and tradition.

Traditionally, there were many activities that culture and Ndau tradition forbid. This includes the use of vulgar language, sexual taboos such as prostitution or to run a leg which were deemed sacred and classified as forms of cultural violations. Perpetrators would be punished and their families were cursed. However, these have literally changed with the emergence of the armed struggle in the community of Chipinge West. The armed struggle to some extent accommodated moral decadence whereby young women embarked on prostitution and this resulted sometimes

¹⁴²Interview with elderly women, about the ceasefire and further victimisation of women, Mutema Village, on 28/09/2015.

¹⁴³N. Krieger, *Zimbabwe's Guerrilla War and Guerrilla Veterans in Post- War Zimbabwe*, Ports mouth, NH, Heinemann, 1991, pp. 10-25.

in early marriages and disrespect of the elders. Mbuya Mahachi in an interview said, '*Ngendaa yehondo vasikana avachachingamidzi vakuru. Karetu vasikana vai pfugama vokotamise masoro pamberi pevakuru. Asi nyamashi uno zveshe zvakapera ingatei azvikoshi kubeni ndiyo yainge njira yekukudzana ndiyo*'.¹⁴⁴ This had this to say, because of the war, young girls no longer greet the elders. Long back girls were used to kneel down and bore their heads before the elders, but now all has vanished as if it is irrelevant and yet it was a form of respect.

People no longer observe sacred days (chisi) as they have completely nullified it. The penalty for not observing sacred days were disregarded. This indicates that the armed struggle impacted negatively on women in Chipinge West constituency because it destroyed women's morality and promoted cultural decadence.

5.2. Social Impact of the armed struggle on women.

Following the period of the armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency there was the breakdown of family structures and values. The armed struggle changed completely the household power relations. In a situation where women remained in the rural areas, while men went to work in the local plantations such as Tanganda Tea Estates, Wattle Company and Forestry Commission and Silverstone plantations, they were then in full control of everything (whether economic, social, political and cultural activities). Men usually left for employment as a way of escaping from the war situation. Mrs. Mutumbami commented on this as she said, '*Izvi zvakava nedambudziko guru ngekuti varume vakange vasisina chiremera kana kutame maturo*

¹⁴⁴ Interview with Mbuya Mahachi, Mutema, Bamhamire Village, on 28/09/2015.

sekuti vakadzi vanga votonga neku ronga budiro yemhuri sekurima. Zvekurya zvaiita zvisomani. Pakupedzisira madzimai aifa ngenzara. Zvaka konzere kurambana'.¹⁴⁵ This impacted negatively as the husband's authority in his family was undermined or reduced since women became decision making champions and organisers of family development issues such as farming activities. The food rations were never adequate. At the end forced women to starve. This caused many couples to separate or divorce.

5.3. Change of gender roles.

Traditional gender roles were redefined during the armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency as young women and elderly women came home late at night from the night-time mobilisation sessions. This was not known before the armed struggle. Traditionally, there are some roles expected to be performed by men. However, the cause of circumstances brought about by the liberation war there were some female oriented roles that were now performed by men. For example, men could prepare meals while their women were away. In this case, in Ndau society's tradition and culture women were expected to be at home in order for them to do their domestic duties. Women were responsible for paying school fees and sent their children to school and doing men's work. Culturally; it is a taboo for husbands to fetch water and cook for the family. Mrs. Chikati in an interview stated that, '*Urongwa utsva hwaka uya nehondo, vamuna vooneka vechibikire mhuri pamwoto nekuchere mvura kwaTanganda kurwizi vakadzi vei ushe mwombe kumafuro. Inga zviru nani kuti madzimai vaushe mwombe pane vamuna*'.¹⁴⁶ This means that, in the new order that prevailed during the armed struggle, men would be seen doing

¹⁴⁵Interview with Mrs. Mutumbami, Mutema, Musani Village, on 28/09/2015.

¹⁴⁶Interview with Mrs. Chikati, Chipote, Bamhamire Village, on 28/09/2015.

cooking and fetching water while women became busy herding cattle during the day. It was risky for men to herd cattle compared to women'. This explains that women's related activities meant that men also had to remain at home sometimes with the children.

5.4. Protected Villages and associated health problems.

The study established that the formation of the Protected Villages in Chipinge West community meant that the whole community had only one piece of land to use for agricultural activities and settlement. The area was over populated because many people from other constituencies where the Rhodesian government did not established Protected Villages were flocking to Chipinge West constituency where the Protected Villages were meant to accommodate many people. The over populated villages in the community were associated with many healthy problems. The healthy problems were multiplied by the lack of the health centers there. Many health centers were closed and some had stopped to operate in the local community. Mbuya Kanjera explained, '*Zvipatara zvizhinji zvakambomire kushanda kusanganisire chepa Birchenough, zvaka paradzwa ngehondo kusiya kweMt Selinda neche kuChipinge kune cheHurumende*'.¹⁴⁷ This translated to say that many hospitals including one at Birchenough Bridge, were destroyed by the war except Mt Selinda and Chipinge Government Hospital. The lack of health facilities in the community resulted in many deaths of women and children. Since they were over populated in the Protected Areas diseases such as malaria, cholera and dysentery spread easily and killed many people. Those women with pregnancies suffered from malnutritional problems. In an interview with Mrs. Machobve who experienced the health problems within her family in Mutema Protected Area, she said, '*Vakadzi vakatambura ngekuyarika varwere. Vakadzi vaka pfuviswa kubve muma*

¹⁴⁷Interview with Mbuya Kanjera, Tanganda Marwendo Village, on 29/09/2015.

vambo kusvike kumapeto. Pakaite wainge arwara ngezvirwere zvaiye makhipi vakadzi ndivo vaimira kuchengeta varwara kusvike mukupona kana kufa'.¹⁴⁸ This had this to say, women suffered from caring burden. Women were traumatised right from the beginning to the end. When someone became sick with diseases in the Protected Villages women were responsible to nurture the sick until their healing or death.

The Protected Villages domesticated women and their movements are strictly limited. This also impacted negatively on women in particular. Like elsewhere in Zimbabwe, Chiweshe experienced problems of moving in and out of the Protected Villages. One woman who was experienced restrictions by the guards in the Protected Villages in Chiweshe interviewed with Mike Kesby in the 1990s was recounted that, 'You know, it's very difficult to have someone always deciding for you what to do, what time to move. It was difficult for us, it was not to our liking but we had no alternative. We accepted something that was not good, through fear. The whole timetable was the DAs' timetable.'¹⁴⁹ This explains that women were always live in fear in the Protected Villages during the armed struggle.

5.5. Armed struggle and its economic impact on women in Chipinge West constituency.

The war generally disturbed the livelihood activities women depended on such as agriculture. Women stopped performing some of their common livelihood activities which resulted in abject poverty to many families. Malnutrition and other diseases caused by the lack of nutritious foods became rampant in the Protected Villages and many women were affected and many of them

¹⁴⁸Interview with Mbuya Machobve, Mutema Bamhamire Village, on 29/09/2015.

¹⁴⁹M. Kesby, Interview with Joy, Chiweshe District, Arenas for Control, Terrains of Gender Contestation: Guerrilla Struggle and Counter-Insurgency Welfare in Zimbabwe 1972-1980, Journal of Southern African Studies, Vol. 22, No. 4, Taylor Francis, Ltd, 1996, pp.561-584.

died together with their children. Shortages of food normally resulted in abject poverty untold suffering of women in the armed struggle. The suffering of women in the armed struggle extended to the immediate aftermath of the armed struggle from 1980 to 1985. The food rations were never adequate. At the end forced women to starve. Mbuya Mbarazana explained as follows:

Pahondo paive nenzara uye mabasa ataiita madzimai anoraramisa sekurima
akambomira. Zvaitemesa musoro mwanangu. Zvimwe zvaidyiwa zvaisa
gutsa uye kutorwarisa. Vamwe vakadzi vaitofa nevana. Zvipfuwo zvakaita
semombe zvakapera kufa teibikira vana mukoma uye zuva rakapisha. Dambudziko
renzara raka vapo kuvika nenguva yekuti hondo yapera.¹⁵⁰

This can be translated to say:

During the war there was drought and all the livelihoods which women depended on such as farming was stopped. It was traumatic my son. Some women died along with their children. Our beasts finished as we always slaughter them for relish to feed the freedom fighters and it was droughty. This problem existed until the end of the war. The study revealed that many people lost their livestock and remained poor and they showed that they would never recover from such losses.

¹⁵⁰Interview with Mbuya Mbarazana, Mutema, Bamhamire Village, on 29/09/2015.

5.6. Political impact of the armed struggle

The armed struggle impacted negatively on women in Chipinge West constituency. The armed struggle was a political event which caused loss of family members and relatives. As men committed and sacrificed to join the armed struggle. Many husbands perished there and many women were widowed and orphanage was rampant during and after the war. This was also problematic, it traumatised the minds. The study illustrate that those who fought in the armed struggle caused suffering of their parents. They failed to maintain discipline and became cruel and disrespect their parents. One female respondent, 75-85 years old, in an interview said, '*Wangu mwana wakarwawo hondo. Pakupera kwakaite hondo wakadzoka achinje hunhu hwake hwekaretu. Achina rukudzo. Ndikade kumutsuura nguva zhinji unondichaya*'.¹⁵¹ My son also fought in the armed struggle. After the war, on his return, he was completely changed his traditional character. He could not respect. Whenever I tried to correct him, I found myself beaten. It is essential to note that in the majority of cases it traumatised and dehumanised the victims. Women were affected politically in the armed struggle because attending *pungwes* was problematic, cooking and ironing or any form of support and any logistics was highly risky as Mbuya Ndapwadza recounted in an interview.¹⁵²

In conclusion, the chapter highlighted the relationship between women in the rural areas with the freedom fighters. It also demonstrated the importance of the Second Chimurenga propaganda and its influence to the masses. The First Chimurenga and its contribution to the Second Chimurenga has been demonstrated in this chapter. This also explains the oppression perpetrated

¹⁵¹Interview with elderly woman, about the armed struggle and its political impact on women, Samhutsa, Nduku Village, on 29/09/2015.

¹⁵²Interview with Mbuya Ndapwadza, Chipote, Bamhamire, on 29/09/2015.

by the white regime in the colonial period. The chapter illustrated the ways used by the whites to dehumanise the black employees in mines and farms and show how this impacted on blacks. The chapter also demonstrated women as victims of the armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency. The risky roles played by women in the armed struggle was discussed. For example, motherhood, working in the fields, providing for fighters and woman as spirit media. The chapter discussed women victimisation by the opposition political parties such as RNM from Mozambique and rebel groups such as *Chimwenje* in order to gain support from the rural women around Chimanimani and Chipinge. The chapter also demonstrated all forms of victimisation used against women in the armed struggle such as rape, sexual harassment and beatings and how this affected women in Chipinge West constituency. The chapter also explored the events of ceasefire and how women were further victimised towards the end of the war in 1979. The chapter also explored the effects of the armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency. This explains the socio-economic, political and cultural impact of the armed struggle on women in Chipinge West constituency.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the main objective of the study is to investigate the impact of the armed struggle on women in Chipinge West constituency between 1974-9. The study has demonstrated that participation of women during the war of liberation involved offering protection through surveillance, moral support, preparing and providing food for the freedom fighters. The position of women in Chipinge district in the traditional Ndau society which provided lessons for their roles which were regarded as insignificant, unrecognised and marginalised by their male counterparts during the armed struggle has been highlighted in this study.

This research also covers issues on women as mothers. The role of women as nurturers in Ndau traditional society has also been considered in this study. The importance of women as spirit mediums (*masvikiro*) in Ndau tradition and culture that was later used as a source of power during the armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency since 1974-9 has been illustrated. This study also discussed women, gender and the armed struggle and illustrates how this has affected the women in Chipinge West constituency. The study has established that colonial period atrocities faced by women in Africa shaped the long standing beliefs that caused men to undermine, in every sense, women's participation or effort.

This study also unveiled the ways in which women in Chipinge West constituency were excluded from the public sphere. The literature review and the overview of this research outlined and stressed, in general, the fact that women were excluded from participation in the armed struggle but remained at home as mothers. The Ndau culture always separates men's every day

routines from those of their female counterparts. There is always division of labour. The division of labour among men and women during the armed struggle holds a common place in the history of the Ndaou people in Chipinge West constituency as this study has demonstrated. This study highlighted that the role of Ndaou women as mothers exposed them to the negative effects of the armed struggle which then became a burden rather than a joy and pride of motherhood. The study established that such roles exposed women to some vulnerability as compared to men during the armed struggle. Women suffered most during the war of liberation in Chipinge West constituency because women's coping strategies were by far different from the coping strategies used by their male counterparts.

The study has demonstrated that the success of the armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency could be credited to the support young women contributed to sustain the liberation war effort between 1974-9 when the country of Zimbabwe was at her pick to fight the Rhodesian regime. The above analysis has indicated the significance of participation of rural adult peasant women as well as the contribution of young women in the armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency. The analysis of the roles carried out by rural peasant women revealed, through oral testimonies in this chapter, that these roles were significant for the success of the armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency.

The study has demonstrated the purpose of the Second *Chimurenga* propaganda in creating a collaborative relationship between the liberation war fighters and the rural population in Chipinge West constituency during the armed struggle. It also established that the Second

Chimurenga propaganda addressed issues of the central themes of the war of liberation to the rural masses. When the liberation war fighters addressed issues of land during the *pungwes* or public mass meetings, they wanted to revive people's memories and pain of loss so that they would appreciate and accept the cause for the war of liberation. Women in general understood better the issue of land alienation because they were already deprived of land rights long before the colonial period by the traditional patriarchal society that gave all land rights to men at the expense of women. Hence they believed and supported what the liberation war fighters talked about regarding land.

This study has demonstrated that the roles played by peasant women in the armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency were a major cause for the greater suffering of women. It has also revealed that the dynamic nature of women's roles and responsibility pre-exposed them to a lot of security problems and vulnerability. The research noted that problems faced by the general population of women in Chipinge West constituency during the armed struggle can be traced back to the compelling roles of women which they could not be separated from, for instance, the role of women as mothers. As mothers, women's responsibilities were to act as shields against danger or any form of harm to their children or families. Roles such as agricultural activities in the fields also impacted negatively on women and children during the armed struggle. The study established that women were responsible for cultivating fields where they grew food for their families and the liberation war fighters. It is this time of going to the fields that they normally would encounter problems. The role of women as spirit media was very important as they helped the liberation war fighters with divine information regarding the movements of the Rhodesian forces and operational strategies. However, spirit mediums also face a lot of challenges through

their divine powers. For example, some were killed for allegedly failing to give information required by the Rhodesian forces regarding their security or whereabouts of the freedom fighters.

The study revealed that women in Chipinge West constituency were victimised by the auxiliaries such as the newly formed Mozambican opposition party, RENAMO (Resistencia Nacional Mocambicana) and some rebel groups such as *Chimwenje* in Zimbabwe. ZANU Ndonga of Ndabaningi Sithole also victimized, abused, exploited and oppressed rural women in Chipinge West constituency to gain support in the armed struggle. RENAMO and Chimwenje victimised women in all forms of abuse such as rape, beatings and sexual harassment. The research found that beatings were rampant in the Protected Villages in the armed struggle in Chipinge West constituency. It is of paramount importance to note inhere that Dhlakama Alfonso and Ndabaningi Sithole and their supporters belonged to the same Nda in Zimbabwe-Mozambique border areas and they committed similar crimes such as rape, kidnapping and sexual harassment of women during the armed struggle.

The study also found little evidence that women were victimised by the liberation war fighters before the ceasefire but the study established that the situation became tense in 1979, when there was ceasefire or when the war was about to end. Many women who were interviewed on this issue in this study explained that the liberation war fighters who joined the war of liberation towards ceasefire were ruthless and cruel than their counterparts who joined in the beginning of the war. The new recruits who joined the liberation forces towards the end of the armed struggle were ill-trained and undisciplined. This study indicated that the armed struggle impacted

negatively on women in Chipinge West constituency because it destroyed women's morality and promoted cultural decadence. The lack of health facilities in the community resulted in many deaths of women and children. Since they were over populated in the Protected Areas diseases such as malaria, cholera and dysentery spread easily and killed many people.

The study established that women were affected politically in the armed struggle because attending *pungwes* was problematic, cooking and ironing or any form of support and any logistics were highly risky. The study revealed women as the most suffering group in the armed struggle as they were also traumatised, dehumanised, and finally psychologically affected.

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