



# NPRC WATCH

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## Stakeholders, Friends, and Partners

### In this Edition

The month of March has been quite harrowing for our country and the world as a whole. We are facing a global public health crisis of unprecedented proportions caused by the emergence of the novel coronavirus which causes an illness known as COVID-19. This virus first emerged in China in December 2019 and fast spread to other parts of the world during the first quarter of the year. According to a time line put together by Aljazeera which can be accessed by visiting <https://www.aljazeera.com/amp/news/2020/01/timeline-china-coronavirus-spread-200126061554884.html> by 7 March the coronavirus had killed nearly 3 500 people and infected another 102 000 people across more than ninety countries with the hardest hit countries being China, Italy and Spain. The coronavirus was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organisation (WHO) on 11 March when it had reached more than 100 countries. To deal with the crisis countries have declared states of disaster and have issued strict orders requiring closure of non-essential businesses, government offices, and schools, and for residents to stay at home and limit social interactions. As a result, factories have reduced or suspended production and companies large and small have been laying off workers which has destabilized economies all over the world. Among the hardest hit are the unemployed people, the low-wage workers and informal traders.

Our country like its neighbouring countries and the rest of the world has not been spared with eleven reported cases and three deaths recorded so far. This has led the President of Zimbabwe, Emmerson Mnangagwa to declare a lockdown of the country for twenty-one days from 30 March. The NTJWG welcomes the lockdown initiative taken by the government and urges citizens to abide by the guidelines set by the government and WHO so as to curb the spread of COVID-19. The NTJWG calls upon the Government of Zimbabwe to ensure that human rights are respected during this period and minimise the risk of conflict. As a result of the directive by the President, the NTJWG Secretariat will be working from home until further notice. However, the Secretariat will continue to keep the nation and out the NTJWG stakeholders updated on emerging transitional justice issues from our country and across the globe, as well as the activities of the NPRC and the NTJWG. As always we welcome your feedback and urge you to stay at home and stay safe.

### IN THE NEWS

### NPRC ACTIVITIES

#### Training of Provincial Peace Committees

In this past month, the NPRC continued carrying out trainings for its Provincial Peace Committees (PPCs) with trainings for the Bulawayo Metropolitan Province, Matabeleland North Province, Mashonaland Central Province and Masvingo Province PPCs being carried out. These PPCs were set up by the NPRC in each province in the country and given the mandate of carrying out peace building and conflict resolution activities in their respective provinces. The motivation behind setting up of the PPCs was the realisation by the NPRC that a one size fits all approach would not work in Zimbabwe because there have been region-specific conflicts such as Gukurahundi which affected the Midlands and Matabeleland Provinces. As such, different issues may arise in different provinces.

These trainings were meant to build the capacity of the members of the PPCs to put them in a better position to tackle the conflicts in their provinces in fulfilment of their mandate. Part of the program included a session on conflict management strategies meant to assist the team with technical knowledge on how to manage conflict and another session on peace building. Speaking at the Bulawayo Metropolitan PPC training the Chairperson of the NPRC, Retired Justice Sello Nare emphasized that peace committee structures around the country shall be the focal point for all the NPRC driven programs. He added that the PPCs need to be adequately capacitated so that they understand their responsibilities towards uniting all Zimbabweans and part of that capacitation was giving them skills that will enable them to interview victims

among other things.

The NTJWG commends the NPRC for taking the initiative to set up the PPCs and also train the members of each PPC on how they should carry out their mandate. We will continue to follow the activities of the PPCs closely and we hope that the NPRC will continue to support them and that they will soon start working in their provinces as visibility of the NPRC is lack in quite a number of provinces. To that end the NTJWG would like to implore the NPRC to impress upon the members of the PPCs the importance of inclusivity in transitional justice processes to ensure long lasting peace and reconciliation. For more information on issues of inclusivity as perceived by the NTJWG you can access the NTJWG Code of Inclusion by visiting <https://www.ntjwg.org.zw/introducing-the-code-of-inclusion/>

### NPRC Undergoes Counselling Course

On 2 March, the NPRC Victim Support, Gender and Diversity Department underwent a counselling course facilitated by Connect-Zimbabwe Institute of Systemic Therapy. This was done to build the NPRC's capacity to handle victims and people who access the NPRC for various reasons. The NTJWG views this as an important training and commends the NPRC's decision to have such a training. In fulfilling its mandate the NPRC through its Victim Support, Gender and Diversity Department will interact with many survivors of past human rights violations and may have to do a lot of counselling during some of the interaction. It is therefore pivotal for the NPRC department responsible for victim support to receive training on counselling so that their interactions with victims does not cause more harm.



### Community Engagement

NPRC Commissioner Patience Chiradza participated in a citizen engagement dialogue meeting facilitated by the Zimbabwe Heads of Christian Denominations in Mutare on the 5<sup>th</sup> of March. The dialogue was attended by traditional leaders, churches and other community leaders. It was aimed at promoting human security whilst respecting rights, duties and responsibilities of citizens. The church and traditional leaders are the gatekeepers in their communities and such interactions as this one are key for building trust between the NPRC and the community. The NTJWG encourages the church, traditional leaders and community leaders to continue having these engagements with the NPRC. Such engagements will help to foster understanding of the mandate of the NPRC so that when the NPRC visits their communities, communities will be able to get the most out of the engagements.

### NPRC Undertakes Conflict Mapping Baseline Survey

The NPRC is planning to undertake a conflict mapping baseline survey in Harare, Manicaland, Mashonaland West, Central and East. The main objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To outline the nature, scope, causes, consequences, actors and impact of conflicts in identified areas in Zimbabwe's ten provinces; and
2. To identify community approaches in resolving alternative dispute resolution mechanisms.

The sub-objectives of the study as indicated are as follows:

1. To identify types of conflicts whose consequences communities still feel;
2. To suggest an alternative dispute resolution mechanism;
3. To identify sexual crimes committed against women and girls during conflict periods;
4. To identify the level of social cohesion in the country;
5. To gauge visibility, awareness and impact of the NPRC

In anticipation of undertaking this very important study, from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> of March the NPRC through its Knowledge Management Thematic Department conducted a training workshop for enumerators who will carry out the survey. The training was aimed at equipping the enumerators with basic skills for collecting data for the baseline study. The workshop focused on the following topics;

- Attributes of a good researcher;
- Background to the survey;
- Expected outcomes of the study;
- Sexual crimes;
- Social Cohesion and Reconciliation Index;
- Conflict Early Warning Early Response





## Consensus Building

On 19 March, the NPRC held a consensus building workshop between NPRC and Provincial heads of government departments in Mashonaland Central Province. Speaking at the workshop Commissioner Rev. Charles Masunungure pointed out that the purpose of NPRC's Complaints Handling and Investigations Department is to establish the truth in order to facilitate healing and reconciliation to those affected by conflicts. He also indicated that the Commission will request for assistance from ZRP to conduct investigations. At the same workshop NPRC Commissioner Choice Ndoro presented the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission Strategic Plan. While the NPRC is an independent commission it is important for it to build good working relationships with government departments particularly if those departments may be helpful in fulfilment of the NPRC's mandate. It is crucial for the NPRC to help members of these departments to understand its mandate. This is important because it will make for easy identification of areas in which the government departments may be of assistance to the NPRC.

## Statement on COVID-19 Virus

In response to the COVID 19 pandemic the NPRC released a statement on the 30<sup>th</sup> of March. In the statement the NPRC commended the Government of Zimbabwe for putting in place measures aimed at prevention and containment of the spread of the virus. The NPRC acknowledged that these measures will impose restrictions on citizens but said that these restrictions are necessary to curtail any potential spread of the virus. The NPRC also urged the public to adhere to the restrictions and guidelines set by the government for the twenty-one day lockdown period so as to maintain peace, public safety and order. Finally, the NPRC said that it ready, in terms of its mandate, to support any efforts to build peace and dissipate conflicts should this become necessary during the lockdown period.

## NTJWG ACTIVITIES

### Annual Retreat for Strategic Reflection

On 5 and 6 March, the NTJWG members met with the Secretariat for the NTJWG's Annual Retreat for Strategic Reflection in Harare. The retreat was facilitated by Mr. Brian Kagoro and aimed at facilitating strategic reflection on the work of the NTJWG, implementation of its strategy and plan for the year 2020. The NTJWG used the retreat as an opportunity to reflect on its 2019 – 2022 strategy with the view of updating it to suit the current operating context while making use of new opportunities that have arisen since the formulation of the strategy in 2019.

## First NTJWG Board Meeting for 2020

The NTJWG members and secretariat met for the first NTJWG quarterly meeting of 2020 on the 6<sup>th</sup> of March. The meeting was attended by nine NTJWG members and four NTJWG Secretariat staff members. The outcomes of the meeting were as follows:

- Dr. Musa Kika was welcomed to the team as the new Programs Coordinator for the NTJWG Secretariat; and
- The NTJWG managed to evaluate activities done in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of the year; and
- The Secretariat managed to inform the members of upcoming activities that they need to diarise; and
- An action plan was formulated to respond to concerns raised in the meeting.

## Community Dialogues

In the month of March, the NTJWG continued carrying out community dialogues aimed at increasing access to information for survivors on the national peace and reconciliation process to allow for informed participation. These community dialogues particularly focused on increasing information on the NPRC and its mandate to enable participants to effectively engage with the NPRC if it eventually visits their areas. The community dialogues were carried out in Ward 24 in Zaka on the 11<sup>th</sup> and was attended by fifty-two people, Ward 17 in Manama on the 11<sup>th</sup> and was attended by thirty-two people, Ward 14 in Chinhoyi on the 12<sup>th</sup> and was attended by forty-two people and finally in Ward 6 in Nyanga, on the 13<sup>th</sup> and was attended by forty-three people. Victims and survivors highlighted that vandalization of sites of memory in Matabeleland South, exhumations and proper burials and composition of the NPRC are issues of concern for them. Cross-cutting issues emerging throughout the dialogues were the yearning by survivors for apologies from perpetrators, compensation of victims, the lack of visibility of the NPRC at community levels, the term of the NPRC so that it completes its work and achieves its mandate, reparations, and the call for the inclusion of perpetrators in the community dialogues.

## Commemoration of the International Day of Truth

In the past month, the NTJWG joined the rest of the world in commemorating the International Day for the Right to the Truth concerning Gross Human Rights Violations and for the Dignity of Victims on the 24<sup>th</sup> of March. This day is observed in part to pay tribute to the memory of Archbishop Monsignor Oscar Arnulfo Romero, who was murdered on 24 March 1980 for his role in denouncing human rights violations perpetrated on the most vulnerable people in El Salvador. The vision and mission of the NTJWG is to enable communities in Zimbabwe that have been torn apart by violence to recover and to empower individuals – victims, witnesses and perpetrators – to recount their experiences and agree on measures of justice to inform the future. To commemorate this day the NTJWG published a press statement which you can read by visiting <https://www.ntjwg.org.zw/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Press-Statement-on-the-International-Day-for-the-Right-to-Truth.pdf>

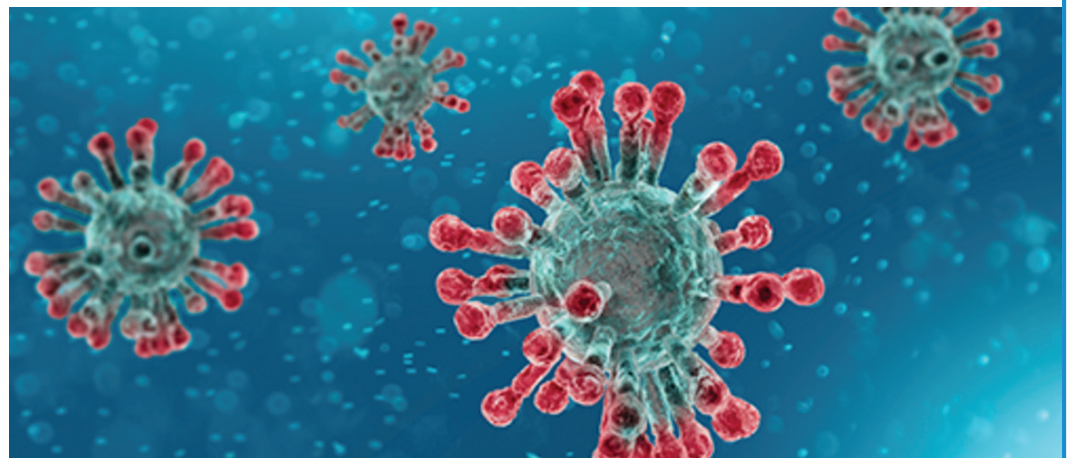
## Around the World Gender Based Crimes before the ICC

The month of March saw the Trial Chamber of the International Criminal Court (ICC) hearing closing arguments in the trial of Dominic Ongwen which commenced in December 2016. Mr Ongwen is a former senior leader of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), a rebel group which operates in northern Uganda, South Sudan, the Central African Republic, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The accused is alleged to have committed seventy counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity against civilian populations in Northern Uganda between July 2002 and December 2005. Among the charges against the accused are nineteen counts of sexual and gender-based crimes, including rape, sexual slavery,

forced marriage, and enslavement. This is the widest range of sexual crimes that have ever been brought to trial before the ICC. This case therefore marks a key milestone in developing a progressive jurisprudence on gender justice and accountability for sexual crimes in contexts of armed conflict. Mr. Ongwen is the first person to be charged with the crime of forced marriage as a crime against humanity under Article 7(1)(k) of the Rome Statute. The prosecutor's decision to bring the charge is significant, not only because the Rome Statute does not specifically stipulate the crime of forced marriage, but because it signifies an attempt to capture the full extent of the abuse suffered by victims of the LRA, which charges of sexual slavery and rape alone cannot do. As the judges of the ICC's Trial Chamber adjourn to write their judgment, victims will be waiting for a verdict, which they hope will vindicate their long quest for truth and justice. The NTJWG stands with the victims and calls upon the Government of Uganda to view this trial as an opportunity to deliver truth, justice, and acknowledgment to victims. It is our belief that immediate steps to provide interim assistance and put in place a comprehensive reparation program to address the long-term physical and psychological effects suffered by victims must be taken. The prosecution of Mr. Ongwen is an important first step toward holding perpetrators accountable and attaining justice for victims but it is not enough, there is still more to be done.

## COVID 19 and Transitional Justice

The daily news cycle has all but transformed into a singularly focused, nonstop update on the current global health crisis. This shows a clear shift in priorities from reporting on events in countries affected by war or emerging from conflict or repression to reporting on the COVID-19 pandemic. This realignment of priorities in the media is welcome as it is crucial for information dissemination and with some luck that information will reach vulnerable and marginalized communities. In many of these communities, people have little or no access to reliable information or to justice — they are victims of human rights abuses, they live in war-torn societies, they are refugees or internally displaced persons, who will certainly be the most susceptible to the ravages of the coronavirus.



The COVID-19 crisis has already proved that the crisis that we are facing is more than just a medical emergency. The pandemic has stretched to the limit the health care and social services systems of some of the richest countries in the world. More broadly, the situation is bringing to the surface many other underlying social, political, and economic problems rooted in historical inequality, exclusion, and injustice. Now that the coronavirus has beset poorer countries where institutions are weaker, most of the economy is informal, and many cannot afford the "luxury" of home confinement or the extra space needed for social distancing, the number of cases and deaths will most likely increase significantly. There will also be increased risk of social turbulence or violence and some authoritarian governments may exploit the preventive measures they are putting in place to contain the virus to expand or abuse their power. In war zones, such as those in Syria and Yemen, this pandemic will likely overwhelm already devastated populations made up of people whose homes have been destroyed or who are fleeing persecution, who are hungry, who have lost their livelihoods, and who lack access to medical care and other basic services. In countries emerging from conflict or repression and grappling with legacies of massive human rights abuses, many victims and members of marginalized communities still struggle to earn a livelihood and secure adequate food, clean water, and health care; they, too, are acutely vulnerable to the coronavirus.

The language that has been used in the media or by politicians to describe the pandemic, the measures to address it and apportion blame does not help the situation. Examples of undesirable politicking around this issue are the branding of the coronavirus as "the Chinese" virus by the President of the United States of America and the sentiments expressed by the Zimbabwean Minister of Defense to the effect that this virus is God's punishment to countries that imposed sanctions on Zimbabwe. The NTJWG implores government officials and media personnel alike to act responsibly during this time and make utterances that will be useful in conveying to the population a sense of urgency and the formidable obstacles that lie ahead, and not divide people. This is an opportune time for the world to come together and design and execute global solutions that protect the health of everyone and affirm the dignity of those who have suffered violations of their rights and those who have been deprived of justice.

## FEEDBACK AND THIS NEWSLETTER

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