

## Understanding the Emergence and Solving of Protracted Social Conflicts in Zimbabwe: the Case of Gumbero/Chisina – Njelele Chieftainship Conflict 1940 - 2015

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**Abstract:** This research examines the emergence of protracted social conflicts in Zimbabwe; it focuses on Gumbero/Chisina – Njelele chieftainship conflict. The Gumbero and Njelele conflict is more than 70 years old. The warring parties and the post - colonial government of Zimbabwe have been attempting to solve this conflict by employing various conflict resolution strategies; however, these strategies have not yielded much. The Gumbero group is demanding for the resuscitation of their chieftainship, whilst the Njelele group is against this scheme, they think that they may lose much. However, this article argues that conflict transformation strategies which promote empowerment of the previously disadvantaged group, reconciliation and mutual benefit can solve this protracted social conflict. The research is grounded on Azar Protracted Social Conflict theory and it is largely based on qualitative research method.

**Keywords:** chieftainship, protracted social conflict, conflict resolution, conflict transformation and emergence

### INTRODUCTION

Many African states have a history of violent protracted social conflicts, the Niger Delta conflict (Nigeria) is a typical example. Some of the protracted conflicts were triggered and fuelled by the colonial administrators who employed the divide and rule policy, this policy was tailormade to thwart unity among Africans so that they could not resist European dominance.

The existence of tribal related protracted social conflicts became very visible during the post – colonial period when the previous disadvantaged groups began to demand recognition, empowerment and justice and the thwarting of all forms of colonial injustices hence deepening conflicts. Some of the conflicts have been manipulated by some of the African governments in order to enhance their hegemony. As for the case of the Gumbero – Njelele conflict, the colonial administration manipulated the hostile relationship which existed between the two groups; the Rhodesian government heightened the conflict by downgrading Chief Gumbero to become a Headman and elevating Headman Njelele to become the Chief. The elevation of Njelele to chieftainship was meant to safeguard the hegemonic interests of the colonial administration. In support Kyed and Buur [1] note that colonial systems of governance, which, through a combination of direct and indirect forms of rule, incorporated traditional leaders as an extension of colonial regimes in order to extract human and natural resources and curb organized resistance. The Gumbero – Njelele hostility spilled over into the post-colonial period, this 70year old conflict have not been effectively resolved though measures have been

put by the government to curb it. However, conflict transformation strategy seems to be the proper panacea to this protracted social conflict.

### Area of Study

The study focuses on Gokwe South district which is in the Midlands Province. Njelele – Chisina area is part of the Mapfungautsi Constituency. The area is bounded by two major rivers in the east (Ngondoma and Sanyati) these rivers are the major natural boundaries which separate the district from Mashonaland West province (Sanyati River forms part of the boundary) and Kwekwe district (Ngondoma separates Gokwe and Zhombe area of Kwekwe district of Midlands province). In the west the area is bounded by the famous Chemagora Forest.

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### Protracted Social Conflict Theory

The study is grounded on Edward Azar Protracted Social Conflict theory. This theory argues that protracted conflicts are embedded in interpretative dynamics of past history, psychological relationships, cultural norms, social values and belief systems of

identity groups [2]. Communal groups engage in prolonged conflicts for the major reason of wanting to acquire basic needs such as security, recognition and acceptance, these conflicts therefore revolve around questions of communal identity. Azar argues that prolonged conflicts largely occurs in areas or countries which have a colonial legacy of weak participatory institutions, a hierarchical tradition of imposed bureaucratic rule from metropolitan centres, and inherited instruments of political repression. Societies which have 'multi communal' composition which were formed as a result of divide and rule policies of the former colonial masters or societies which have historical rivalries and dominance of one group over the other tend to experience protracted social conflicts. The theory asserts that countries which have rigid or fragile authority structure have a limited capacity to meet the needs of various constituents, therefore the failure to redress the grievances of the warring groups by the authorities can cultivate a niche for protracted social conflict. This theory largely explains the emergence and the dynamics of the prolonged Gumbero/Chisina – Njelele conflict.

#### METHODOLOGY

The study was largely based on qualitative research methodology. Qualitative data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources included letters given to Headman Chisina by Chief Njelele and the Ministry of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing and letters which were submitted by Headman Chisina to the same Ministry. The study used archival material which was obtained from the Zimbabwe National Archives [3], newspapers and journal articles were also used. The researcher also used interviews and oral traditions (Headman Gumbero and his relatives were interviewed on two occasions, on 18<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> August 2015). Data were analysed thematically using thematic analysis.

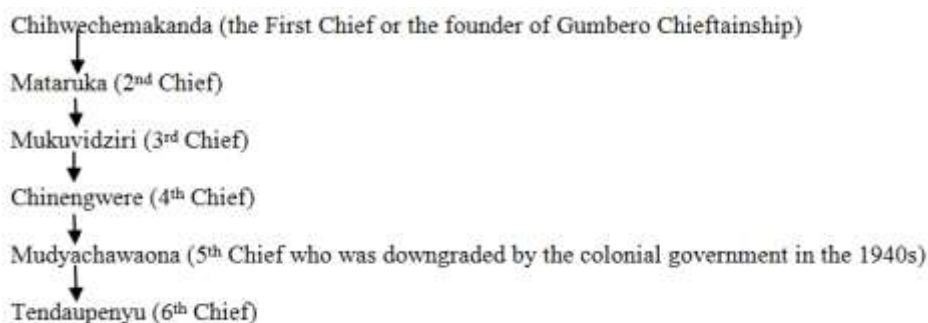
#### The Origins of Gumbero/Chisina Chieftainship

According to a report compiled by C.W. Collet a Rhodesian Delineation Officer in 1965, the Gumbero group is an offshoot of the Vahera under Nyashanu of Buhera. They migrated to Sebungwe area (present day Gokwe area) many centuries ago. However, the reasons of migration are not clear. However, Beach [4] asserts that the disintegration of the Old Buhera actually

precipitated mass exodus of the Mbiru or Hera people from Buhera, he [4] notes that “the weakening of Old Buhera may have been partly the result of civil wars, but it may also have been due to the tendency of many Hera to move away from the control of the Nyashanu dynasty.” The environmental factors probably contributed to the migration of the Hera people. In support Beach [4] states that the environmental factors were involved in the political reorganisation and emigration of the Hera people from the centre to the outer parts of Old Buhera or even to places much farther afield. Some of the groups which migrated from Old Buhera under Nyashanu included Masarirambi or Mutekedza dynasty, this group migrated around 1746±28 other groups such as the Mapanzure and Matenda dynasties migrated at the end of the eighteenth century [4]. It can therefore be deduced that the Gumbero people were part of the massive exodus from the Old Buhera of Nyashanu, their settlement at Sebungwe area occurred way before colonisation, probably they migrated to Sebungwe area between 1700 and 1799. This migration period is derived from the Beach's assertions that: (a) Nyashanu chieftainship/lordship in Buhera was established about the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century when Mbiru was deposed by his son, (b) during the 18<sup>th</sup> century civil wars occurred and by the close of the century big and small Hera groups had migrated from Old Buhera [4]. It is therefore possible that the Gumbero people migrated during the above assumed epoch.

When the Gumbero people arrived in Sebungwe they settled near Chidoma on the Mwembezi River [3] where they established their chieftainship in line with their culture and belief systems of the Vahera, they maintained their Shava/Mofu totem; this totem was their source of pride and identity as it was linked with the chieftainship legacy of the Vahera people of Buhera. Religion appeared to be of paramount importance to the Gumbero people, when they settled at Chidoma they established a spiritual pool on a small stream west of the Chidoma hill [3]. Their first ancestors were buried near Chidoma. Currently the Gumbero people live in Chisina area near Gwanika, this area is bordered by Munyati River at the east.

#### Gumbero Chiefs



Before the development of the Gumbero – Njelele conflict, the Gumberos controlled vast tracts of lands stretching from Gondoma River to Chemumvuri. In the 1940s Chief Mudyachawaona refused to collaborate with the colonial government in the chibharo system, this act of ‘insubordination’ caused the downgrading of the Gumberos (from chieftainship to headmanship) and marked the elevation of Headman Njelele to become the new Chief of the area. Njelele was not a member of the Gumbero family, he migrated to the area with his people and was given a place to settle and was later appointed to become the Headman under Chief Gumbero. The Gumbero people did not lose only their inheritance they also lost their social status and integrity they were now referred as the Chisina people, or people of Headman Chisina, this name became the official name of the Gumbero Headmen which is still in use at the current juncture.

According to oral tradition Chief Tendaupenyu was asked to identify area under his jurisdiction by a White Officer after the elevation of Headman Njelele to become a Chief, he pointed out that in Shona “*ini handichina*”, meaning I’m left with nothing, from onwards the White men started to refer to the Gumberos and the lands under their jurisdiction as Chisina. In support of this assertion Collet [3] identifies Tandawapenyu as the first Chisina, though he was not officially recognised as a Headman by the colonial government. Collet [3] notes that Mangaba was the first officially appointed and recognised Chisina Headman, this was done in 1957, this recognition made the downgrading and the undermining of Gumbero’s Chieftainship a reality and opened sores which became permanent scars.

### **The Relationship of the Gumberos and other Tribal Groups in Sebungwe area**

Generally, relations between tribes and clans in Africa has been largely hostile, this hostility can be largely attributed to scarce resources in the area, boundary issues and the general need to dominate the other groups or clans, stereotyping and the influence of external actors. However, on the case of the Gumbero people, they had cordial relations with other groups in the area. Their relationship with the Mvurumo people largely testifies this assertion. According to Collet [3] the Gumbero and Mvurumo people arrived in the Gokwe district simultaneously. Their peaceful co-existence is witnessed by the diplomatic ties between the two groups; intermarriages were encouraged in order to cement relations. Collet [3] notes that Dematsika, who was one of the Mvurumo ancestors was a son of Chief Gumbero’s sister. Due to cordial relations between the two groups, the Mvurumo people were assimilated in the political system of the Gumberos as they became the *matunzwi* (the nominators of chiefs) of the Gumbero family. The assimilation of the Mvurumo people in the political

system was largely meant to thwart animosity and hostility between the two groups.

### **Gumbero – Njelele Relations before the Chibharo Incident of 1940s**

The Njelele group arrived in the Gokwe area after the Gumbero and Mvurumo people had already settled in the area. In agreement Collet [3] argues that the two families (Gumbero and Mvurumo) settled in the Gokwe district long before Njelele and his group. When Njelele arrived in the area Gumbero had already established his Chiefdom. According to the Gumberos (in their letter written to the Midlands Provincial Administrator and Governor 24 June 2009), when the Njelele group arrived in Gokwe area they asked for a place to settle from Chief Gumbero, Gumbero gave them land to establish a temporary settlement at a place known as little Chidoma. Chief Gumbero later transferred the Njelele group to Nyarupakwe at a place known as Kadzongwana which was approximately 100km from Chidoma the centre of the Gumbero’s lordship. The Gumberos attempted to peacefully co-exist with the Njelele group; however, as time elapsed hostility and animosity started to develop.

### **The Genesis of the Gumbero – Njelele Animosity**

The current hostility between Chief Njelele and Headman Chisina can be fully comprehended when we focus on past historical events. This view is supported by Werh’s conflict mapping guide [5], he stresses the importance of ‘conflict history’ in understanding and solving conflicts. When Chief Gumbero transferred Njelele to Nyarupakwe area, Njelele started to grab more land without the permission of the Chief hence defying the cultural norms and values of the Gumberos. Njelele’s action was contrary to Shona customs and traditions; it was the duty of the Chief to distribute land. In support Makahamadze, Grand and Tavuyango [6] argue that it was the “Traditional leaders (chiefs) who were also responsible for protecting and distributing land among their subjects. Land in pre-colonial Shona was viewed as a sacred commodity...They believed that the land belonged to the ancestors and that the chiefs were its custodians...Chiefs were also mandated to distribute the land among their people equitably.” Therefore, the action of Njelele was tantamount to a rebellion. After the land grabbing incident, Gumbero removed Njelele from Nyarupakwe/Tongwe area and settled him to an area near present-day Gokwe town and was made to become the Headman area by Chief Gumbero.

### **The Marking of Boundaries**

According to Collet [3] the entire Nyarupakwe River was the earliest boundary between the two groups. This was probably laid by Gumbero when he transferred Njelele from his temporary settlement at little Chidoma. According to oral tradition, the two warring parties engaged in a serious conflict at Hovano

-Mapfumo area (this place is approximately 19km from the present Gokwe town it is along Kwekwe – Gokwe highway). In this conflict Mutoyerwizi of the Njelele people is believed to have used magic and prevailed against the Gumbero people hence forcing the two groups to engage in a conflict resolution, they agreed to re-divide land and re-draw the boundaries. The sharing was done in a vlei area called Hovano (Hovano means sharing or dividing, this area is about 19kms from Gokwe town).

#### The Hovano Boundary Agreement

The Hovano agreement was a conflict resolution strategy which was done by conflicting parties. This agreement was done to thwart future disputes over boundaries. The Hovano agreement gave Chief Gumbaro all the lands on the Eastern side of the Hovano and Headman Njelele was given lands on the Western side of Hovano near the current Njelele Business centre. It can be noted that though Gumbero lost his lands he remained as a Chief and still controlled a great part of the lands as shown in the Rhodesian map below.



Fig-1: A Rhodesian map of Chisina – Njelele area, showing functional or jurisdiction boundaries of Chief Njelele and Headman Chisina (this is a copy which have been kept by the Gumbero Headmen since 1970s)

It can also be noted that the Hovano agreement did not transfer Gumbero's chieftainship to Njelele, it was a mere boundary agreement. Though this agreement was reached, relations between the two were never amended; the agreement did not address the root causes of the conflict. Njelele remained ambitious to even expand his authority to cover the entire escarpment. Collet [3] notes that Njelele claimed that Mtanke was the traditional boundary between him and Chisina, however Collet never found evidence of Njelele's claim, this clearly shows that Njelele remained eager to dominate and control more lands of Gumbero. It can also be noted that this claim was actually violating the terms of the Hovano agreement since Mtanke was in the Eastern side of the Hovano valley it automatically belonged to Gumbero and secondly Hovano was the set boundary and the escarpment became the natural boundary between the two groups.

#### Chief Gumbero and the Colonial Regime and the Birth of Njelele Chieftainship

The economic development of the colony was largely as a result of oppressive economic policies of the regime such as the *Chibharo system* or forced

labour. Mlambo [7] notes that "the shortage of labour in the colony led to the chibharo, or coerced labour system where African males were press-ganged to work on both private and public projects for no pay." Forced labour was one of major causes of the First Chimurenga of 1896 -7. Though this chibharo system caused turmoil in the 1890s in the colony, the regime chose to perpetuate it. Chiefs across the country were forced to send labourers to work in various projects such as dam, road and airbase construction and Chief Gumbero was not an exception. In support Kurebwa [8] notes that the colonial regime used Chiefs as primary policy implementers. In elaboration Makahamadze, Grand and Tavuyango [6] state that Chiefs were made to collect taxes on behalf of the government and chiefs were salaried according to the amount of the tax they would have collected and they were supposed to provide cheap labour from their communities. It can be noted that Chiefs were made to advance the oppression of their subjects by the colonial regime.

In the 1940s Chief Gumbero was compelled by the colonial regime to provide labour for the construction of the Thornhill airbase in Gwelo (Gweru), Chief Gumbero refused to send his men to chibharo

after he had realised that most of his men had perished in Wankie (Hwange) providing their labour to the government under the same forced labour scheme. According to Makahamadze, Grand and Tavuyango [6] failure to comply with the government instruction implied prosecution. However, in the case of Chief Gumbero it was worse than prosecution, the colonial government downgraded Chief Gumbero, he was made to become a Headman, and Njelele who was Gumbero's Headman was promoted to become a Chief, he was rewarded for the collaboration in the exploitation of the African labour. Oral tradition notes that Njelele aided the government in ransacking villages and forcing Africans to go and work at the Thornhill airbase. Collet [3] clearly highlights that "Gumbero earned disfavour with the early administrators over the chibharo system, as a result of this it is claimed that Njelele was recognised as a Chief and Gumbero not."

The installation of Njelele as a new Chief of the area clearly testified that the regime was not at all comfortable with the traditional leaders who were against its oppressive and dictatorial rule. In order to enhance its hegemony, the colonial regime interfered in the traditional leadership system. Alemazung [9] states that the colonizers ruled without the consent of the people: they deposed and executed traditional rulers, when the latter failed to implement the instructions of colonial administrators or failed to serve the need of the colonial government. In support Makahamadze, Grand and Tavuyango [6] note that the "Native Commissioner facilitated in the installation of new chiefs, He screened the candidates for chieftainship and headmanship to ensure that the right candidates for the posts were appointed... from the time of European conquest, chieftainship and other positions depended not only on inheritance laws but also on the government approval." The colonial regime manipulated and distorted the African traditional leadership system, as Chiefs were forced to become mere puppets and White men's instruments tailor-made to propel the hegemonic interests of the whites. Therefore, the installation of Njelele clearly ignored the customary laws of Africans and to the Gumberos his installation was unjustified and unacceptable.

According to Makahamadze, Grand and Tavuyango [6] "traditional chiefs could stay in office until death as long as they obeyed the precepts of the ancestors. The Shona proverb, '*Hakuna zuva rinobuda rimwe risati radoka*' (There is no sun that rises before the other one has set), implies that the chief could not be deposed as long as he had the backing of the ancestors. However, chiefs who despised the ancestors and did not rule according to the democratic guidelines given by the ancestors through the spirit mediums risked losing their positions." Therefore, the appointing of Njelele to become Chief was contrary to this Shona belief. Probably it was going to make a bit of sense if

the Whites had appointed a new Chief from the Gumbero family in place of the deposed.

It can be noted that the colonial administrators actually heightened the hostility and animosity between the Gumberos and Njeleles who have been rivals for a long period. The colonial regime was merely employing its old strategy of divide and rule, which made sure that Africans were not to unite and fight colonialism together. Though Gumbero was downgraded his subjects still viewed him as Chief. Chief Gumbero can be viewed as one of the earliest 'freedom fighter' of the post 1<sup>st</sup> Chimurenga juncture; he chose to be downgraded rather to send his people to chibharo to advance the interests of the colonial regime.

Makahamadze, Grand and Tavuyango [6] assert that "the settler government did not force anyone to become a chief. The people could still not participate in the chieftainship of that time 'if they so wished. Accepting the office of chieftainship also meant that Africans were willing to serve the new government. They became willing participants in the colonial exploitative schemes. It could therefore be argued that the introduction of incentives in the form of money attracted many Africans to the extent of wanting to work for the colonial government at all cost." The new appointed Chief Njelele agreed to perpetuate the colonial exploitative scheme which Gumbero was trying to tumble down. It can be highlighted that it is not only Chief Gumbero who received this form of humiliation for opposing the exploitation and oppression of Africans, Chief Makiwa Nyashanu was deposed by the colonial administration for refusing to have his subjects in restricted areas commonly known as 'keeps' that would make it impossible for the freedom fighters to access food from the people (Makahamadze, Grand and Tavuyango [5]. Both Chiefs were punished for resisting colonial oppression and it is interesting that both Chiefs share the same great ancestor Mbiru of the Vahera people of Buhera.

#### **Gumbero/Chisina under the Chieftainship of Njelele**

After the downgrading of Chief Gumbero to headmanship, Gumbero became a subordinate of Chief Njelele. Gumbero was officially recognised as a Headman in 1957, Mangaba became the first official headman, taking the title Headman Chisina. It can be noted that the colonial regime adopted this 'Chisina' title probably to shame and humiliate the Gumbero people and probably the Gumberos accepted it as a way of protesting, showing the world the extent of colonial injustice in Rhodesia. The term 'Chisina' to the Gumberos was synonymous to humiliation and segregation; it revealed a double a loss that is their loss at Hovano (the Hovano Agreement) and their loss of Chieftainship and inheritance after the Chibharo incident of the 1940s.

When Njelele became the official Chief of the area, he extended his boundaries beyond the Hovano boundary hence defying the Hovano Agreement. Parts of Mapfungautsi plateau and escarpment were now under the jurisdiction of Njelele. For example, Chidoma area (the first settlement of the Gumbero people) and the Mvurumo people who were living below the escarpment were now under the jurisdiction of Njelele [3], therefore the Gumberos lost their historical and spiritual settlement (in Chidoma there was a spiritual pool for the Gumberos). Collet [3] notes that Njelele claimed that the real boundaries between the Chisina and Njelele lands was the Mtanke area. Collet [3] admitted the fact that Mvurumo people were under Gumbero's jurisdiction; "Mvurumo should by rights come under Chisina and if this were to come about then Chisina's boundary would shift to include him." The colonial government deliberately ignored the historical ties which existed between the Mvurumo and the Gumbero people in a bid to spearhead its divide and rule agenda. The government supported Chief Njelele land grabbing escapade and placing Mvurumo under the control of Njelele, this move promoted its divide and rule policy. Collet (who was the then delineation officer in the 1960s) went on to propose the granting of judicial powers to the Mvurumos and the establishment of a functional boundary between Gumbero and Mvurumo on the pretext that Gumbero and Mvurumo were two different communities.

After the downgrading of Gumbero, Njelele further extended boundaries to his advantage; the functional boundaries of Gumbero/Chisina area were now (a) Mdzongwe River to the north (b) Munyati River to the east and Chevecheve River to the south sharing the boundary with Mvurumo and to the west with Chief Njelele on the escarpment [3]. The colonial administrators created complexities and confusion in the area especially in Mdzongwe- Nyarupakwe area. The people in this area were permitted to take their cases to either Njelele or Chisina, it became difficult for the people to go to Chisina due to the fact the dunzwi (nominators of chiefs) of Njelele lived in Tongwe area, given this fact, it seemed that this area was under the Njelele's jurisdiction and Njelele spelt it out clearly to Collet in 1965 that he intended to appoint a muchinda (meaning messenger) for Mutongwe and this meant that Nyarupakwe area was going to come directly under Njelele not Chisina [3].

### **Gumbero – Njelele Relations in the Post-Colonial Epoch**

The Gumbero - Njelele sour relations spilled into the new political era (the post-colonial epoch). According to an interview with Headman Chisina (Alfias George Gumbero), the Gumbero people presented their issue to the new government of Zimbabwe and they pointed out clearly that they wanted their Chieftainship to be reinstated [10]

The government did not promptly attend to the demands of the Gumberos in the early years of independence. This can be probably attributed to the facts that Zimbabwe like some other independent African states viewed Chiefs as repressive collaborators of the colonial masters and as impediments to the modernization and nation-building projects [1]. In support Makahamadze, Grand and Tavuyango [6] note that "The ZANU PF government that replaced the colonial regime in 1980 discredited the institution of chieftainship. It further clipped the powers of chiefs, which were already adversely reduced by the colonial government. At independence, the government adopted socialist policies that excluded the roles of the traditional leaders..." In 1995 the Ministry of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing made it a policy that until further notice there should be no resuscitation/revival and or, upgrading of any Chieftainship, Headmanship or Village Headship (this was contained in the circular minute number 3 of 1995). This policy might have worked against the reinstatement of Gumbero's chieftainship during the early years of Uhuru (independence).

### **The Perpetuation of the conflict in the new Millennium**

Chief Njelele wrote a letter on the 14<sup>th</sup> of November 2013 to Headman Chisina informing him that he was going to rename all Chisina lands and they were to be named after Chief Njelele. Chisina 1, 2 and 3 were to be known as Njelele 4, 5 and 6 respectively. According to the letter, Headman Gumbero was to lose his jurisdiction over Chisina 1 and 3 and these areas were to be directly under the jurisdiction of Chief Njelele, Headman Chisina was to remain in charge of a small area (Chisina 2). According to headman Chisina Alfias George Gumbero this was a deliberate move by Njelele meant to finally destroy the legacy and history of the Gumbero people and this move was merely completing the process which was already in motion since the colonial era. In 2004 Headman Gumbero wrote a petition to the district administrator demanding the resuscitation of the Gumbero Chieftainship. The district Administrator wrote a letter to the Provincial Administrator informing the administrator about the Gumbero and Njelele conflict, and desire of the Gumberos to see the reinstatement of their Chieftainship.

In 2009, the Gumberos sent another petition which was directly addressed to the Provincial Administrator, in this petition the Gumberos chronicled their entire history and outlined how they lost their chieftainship. In the 2010 Chronicle story [10] the Midlands Provincial Administrator Ms Cecilia Chitiyo confirmed that headman Chisina indeed raised the issue of having his chieftainship reinstated, she pointed out that "It's true that Headman Chisina engaged the government on the issue through my office. Government can only make a decision on the issue after

establishing the truth surrounding the disputed chieftainship. This means we have to appoint a commission of inquiry to investigate the matter.”

According to Headman Chisina as from 2003 the relationship between him and Chief Njelele became very hostile, this relationship culminated into his arrest and suspension. He was arrested on allegations that: a) he presided over criminal matters which he had no jurisdiction to preside over, b) he was corrupt as he demanded cattle to appoint village heads. On the 13<sup>th</sup> of February 2007 Headman Chisina received a suspension letter from the Ministry of Local Government, Public Works and Development, his suspension was in accordance with the Traditional Leadership Act Chapter 29:17. However, the Headman was proved innocent; he was reinstated as the Headman on the 24<sup>th</sup> of March 2008. The reinstatement letter from the Ministry outlined that the Provincial Administrator “should counsel both the Headman and Chief Njelele so that the two do not continue with their previous misunderstanding.” According to the Chronicle newspaper [9] Headman Chisina pointed out that all these allegations of corruption were “meant to divert the Government’s attention to the issue of reinstating his chieftainship.” Basing with the statement of the Ministry that the two should be reconciled so that they could not continue with their previous misunderstanding it can be deduced that the accusations made and the arrest of the Headman can be linked to this protracted conflict between the Gumberos and the Njeleles.

### **Moving towards Conflict Transformation**

Since the development of Gumbero – Njelele conflict (dating back to the earlier years when the Njeleles were relocated from their temporary settlement) attempts have been made to solve the conflict. When Njelele started to expand his given boundaries without permission from the Chief Gumbero, the Chief re-located him and gave him Headman status. After the Hovano - Mapfumo showcase in which Gumbero was defeated by Njelele a Hovano agreement was reached and boundaries were marked between the two. These measures were earliest forms of conflict resolution meant to solve the conflict. However, the weakness of this method is that it did not address the root cause of the conflict. It can be noted that solving the previous boundary through the Hovano Agreement did not enhance real peace between the two groups but rather sowed the seeds of mistrust and deepened the hostility. This mistrust and back biting came out openly when Njelele openly collaborated with the Whites in the 1940s supporting the Chibharo system which Chief Gumbero was resisting hence leading to his downgrading and upgrading of Njelele to become Chief.

Up to the current juncture the post – colonial government has not found a lasting solution to this

conflict. The post – colonial government seems to be applying conflict resolution strategy as opposed to conflict transformation. The Ministry of Local Government, Public Works and Urban Development in its 2008 letter for the reinstatement of Headman Alfas George Gumbero pointed out that the Provincial Administrator is called to counsel both the Headman and Chief Njelele so that they do not continue with their previous misunderstanding. This statement simply meant that the administrator was tasked to end the squabble probably by enhancing harmony and peace between the two, however this move did not mean the end of the conflict as long the root cause was not addressed, harmony could be attained for a short period but later the conflict could resurface. Lederach [11] notes that conflict resolution attempt to reach ceasefire; ceasefire agreements and general peace talks do not end structural violence. The major weakness of conflict resolution is that it focuses on short term [12], this is true with regard to the way in which the government of Zimbabwe is handling this Gumbero – Njelele conflict and the government is largely concerned with stopping the quarrel not with transforming the conflict to a greater extent. Since the Gumbero people are demanding for justice therefore conflict transformation seems to be an ideal strategy to end this protracted conflict.

### **The Establishment of a Commission of Inquiry**

In 2006 a Provincial Task Team was set up to look into Chisina – Njelele conflict, the task team was meant to determine the truth of the matter. The Commission of Inquiry was dispatched to gather information and to verify the claims of the Gumbero people. The establishment of the Commission was a formidable step towards conflict transformation. Lederach [11] notes that conflict transformation strategy if implemented promote justice, reduce violence, restore broken relations, it embraces forgiveness, reconciliation and empowerment of the previous disadvantaged group. This means whatever settlement is reached it must mend relations and empower the Gumbero people who has been disadvantaged for many years.

According to Headman Chisina, the Gumbero people are not demanding for the termination of the Njelele chieftainship, but they need to be restored their inheritance and be given their chieftainship status, they are not demanding for retributive justice which is based on the notion of an ‘eye for an eye or tooth for a tooth’. They are willing to co-exist with the Njeleles peacefully as has been the case when the Njelele group arrived in the area, they are therefore demanding for restorative justice. When the government established a commission of inquiry to ascertain the veracity on the claims of the Gumberos, this was a significant move towards conflict transformation thus making fundamental shift from conflict resolution strategy. However, the government is now delaying to complete the process. Rupesinghe in

Gounden and Solomon (undated) argue that conflict transformation is an ongoing process which has to enhance sustainable structural and attitudinal changes within broader society. Therefore, the government is urged to complete the initial stages of the process so that supporting frameworks can be put in place to sustain the entire process of conflict transformation.

### **The Possibility and Inevitability of the Reinstatement of the Gumbero Chieftainship**

Though the government of Zimbabwe is 'snailing' in reinstating the Gumberos, it appears to be possible that the Gumbero chieftainship can be resuscitated if the government choose to be impartial when it comes to the addressing of the colonial injustice. On the 27<sup>th</sup> of May 2015 the Chanetsa Chieftainship was resuscitated. Chief Chanetsa of Makonde also felt a victim of colonial segregation and oppression, he was relegated to become a headman after he resisted further forced migration and resettlement (was forced to migrate from Makonde to Hurungwe, he resisted further migration to Kweche area), the angry Chief pointed a gun to the district commissioner culminating to his relegation [13]. It took 65 years for Chanetsa chieftainship to be reinstated. The both Chiefs can be said played a significant role in resisting colonial injustice and in defending the liberty and freedom of the Africans, it is therefore also of equal importance to reinstate the Gumberos who have been in limbo for more than 65years.

It is worthy to note that Headman Chisina has 148 village heads under him; this figure is quite far above the number of village heads which most chieftainships have. His area of jurisdiction has a total population of around 49 356 people (2012 population census). The area has 23 primary and 8 secondary schools and five clinics. Given these facts it seems quite noble for the government to resuscitate the Gumbero Chieftainship.

### **CONCLUSION**

The current Gumbero – Njelele conflict is an example of a protracted conflict which has been in existence for many decades. The colonial regime exacerbated the hostility between the two when it downgraded Chief Gumbero to become a mere headman for resisting colonial injustice and upgraded Headman Njelele who has been a historical rival of Chief Gumbero. Since independence the Gumbero people have been demanding for justice to be done as they seek for the reinstatement of their Chieftainship. The Gumbero – Njelele conflict became protracted and unresolved due to the conflict resolution strategies which have been implemented by both the warring parties and the government. This conflict can be eradicated effectively when the government and the warring parties use conflict transformation strategies which promote empowerment, reconciliation, forgiveness and harmony. Azar protracted social

conflict theory indeed to greater extent explains the emergence and development of the Gumbero – Chisina 70-year-old conflict.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

In solving this protracted conflict, the government is recommended to employ conflict transformation strategies which promote reconciliation, forgiveness, relationship building and empowerment and benefit to all the conflicting parties.

The government is recommended to speed up the reinstatement of the Gumbero chieftainship in order to preserve its heritage and legacy which is quickly diminishing after a long period of being subjected to isolation and dominance by other groups.

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