

**COUNSELLING SERVICES FOR SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC  
VIOLENCE: EVALUATION OF SERVICES PROVIDED BY MUSASA  
PROJECT IN HARARE, ZIMBABWE**

**Abstract**

**A member of the NGO, Musasa Project, the writer of this dissertation thoroughly and critically evaluates the extent to which it is combating domestic violence against women by men who abuse their rights under customary law in Zimbabwe's highly patriarchal society. Using as the research's focus the actual experiences (or 'lived realities') of women clients of the Project, the writer uses an imaginative combination of modern research methodologies (especially the Women's Law Approach) to collect and analyse a wide range of evidence gathered from within and beyond the organisation. While highlighting the Project's strengths, the writer suggests that, with more donor funding, it needs to improve its services by, inter alia, following up on its interviews, providing better shelter facilities, hiring a full-time lawyer and also providing services for abusive partners.**

**BY**

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**DEDICATION**

**To my Mother with Love**

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## CHAPTER 1

### 1.1 Introduction

*Another black eye and a few broken ribs are of course just the thing to make a woman feel deliciously feminine. (Wilson in Jukes 1994:258).*

Being feminine does not make an individual a punch bag! Violence against women, especially **domestic violence**, is a traumatic experience that causes untold trauma to the abused and is a violation of one's human rights. Domestic violence also perpetuates the stereotyping of gender roles that denies dignity of women as individuals and it stifles human development. Through acts of domestic violence, perpetrators (in most cases men) seek to maintain privileges, power and control over women.

The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women defines domestic violence as,

*"The use of force or threats by a husband or boyfriend for the purposes of coercing and intimidating a woman into submission. The violence can take the form of pushing, hitting, choking, slapping, kicking, burning or stabbing"*

Domestic violence is also defined by United Nations Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs: (1993) as,

*"Any violence between current and former partners in an intimate relationship, wherever the violence occurs. The violence may include physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse."*

It is a known fact that women are abused physically, psychologically, economically and sexually in relationships by their partners but society is not comfortable discussing domestic violence openly as marriage is often viewed as a private matter between two people and discussing it is considered an intrusion into one's private life. Calhoun (1992:54) reinforced the above statement, in a study that was carried out at a shopping centre by Michigan State University.

*At one point, fights were staged between two men. It was documented that many bystanders intervened and attempted to break it up. Next, fights were staged between two women. Same response. Thirdly, fights*

*were staged between a man and a woman. Guess what? Nobody stepped in. Why do you think?*

Domestic violence does not only affect those abused, but it also affects the witnesses, children, family members, co-workers, friends, and the community at large. Children who witness domestic violence are victims themselves and growing up amidst violence predisposes them to a multitude of social and physical problems. Domestic violence occurs across society regardless of age, gender, race, class, religion, sexuality, wealth and geography. It also hinders personal development.

Many domestic violence cases go unreported to police and other authorities, as survivors<sup>1</sup>, in most cases women, fear being shunned, labelled or stigmatised. Cultural as well as societal values have played a pivotal role in the manifestation of different forms of abuse. Women in intimate relationships who suffer abuse at the hands of their partners or other family members need to be empowered so that they know their rights. Counselling is one of the empowerment processes, that is crucial for the well-being of the abused women.

The context is the fact that in the face of the problem of domestic violence, NGOs and women's organisations play a critical role in putting up a variety of measures to address the problem. These can range from counselling, offering of shelter to abused women, offering legal assistance and public education programmes. Whether these strategies work is clearly an important issue for analysis given the traumatic nature of domestic violence.

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<sup>1</sup> Different sectors use different terms for people who fall victim to domestic violence and sometimes the terms victim and survivor can be used interchangeably. The Police and the legal sector call battered women victims, but in the women's movement, and for the purposes of this research I will call the victim **a survivor**, because in counselling, the term is empowering. The term is debatable as one may ask, 'at what point is one called a survivor? According to this research, a survivor is someone who makes an effort to seek assistance to address her situation through seeking information and/or other services.

Musasa Project is one such organisation that offers intervention programmes for survivors of domestic violence. Its core business is counselling of battered women who walk in through their door to seek help. This research therefore is significant in that it seeks to analyse the impact of services offered by Musasa Project to reduce problems of domestic violence. The organisation offers counselling, shelter and legal services as well as public education programmes that target to empower women who are in abusive intimate relationships as well as educate society on the negative impact of domestic violence.

## **1.2 BACKGROUND TO MUSASA PROJECT**

Musasa Project was established in 1988 by two Professional women, Sheelagh Stewart, a lawyer and Jill Taylor, a Psychologist, in response to growing levels of violence against women, with a thrust towards domestic violence in particular. It is a registered welfare organisation and is donor funded. The organisation focuses primarily on counselling which is a professional helping process that assists the clients to deal with their presenting problems in a realistic and practical manner.

Since its inception, the institution has sought to respond to different types of violence in relationships, namely, physical, psychological, sexual and financial with a view to offer counselling, shelter, legal services as well as public education to survivors of domestic violence, service providers and communities in Zimbabwe. Musasa Project has offices in Harare, Bulawayo and Gweru. This research targeted Harare Office, as it is the only one of the three Musasa Project offices that has a safe house.

## **1.3 Vision of Musasa Project**

To have a society in which an increasing number of women live free of gender violence and are able to participate fully in development.

### **1.3.1 Mission Statement of Musasa Project**

To aspire to be a leading activist organization that enables targeted groups in society to change beliefs, attitudes, behaviours, laws and policies in order to reduce gender violence with particular emphasis on domestic violence.

### **1.3.2 Objectives of Musasa Project**

To realise its vision and mission statements, Musasa Project's objectives<sup>2</sup> are as follows:-

1. To educate the public and authorities on the illegality and unacceptability of violence against women and children.
2. To counsel survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault and /or child abuse.
3. To provide legal and any other assistance to the survivors of domestic violence, child abuse and sexual abuse.
4. To train volunteer counsellors.
5. To cooperate with any groups prepared to tackle the issue of violence against women.

To achieve the above objectives, Musasa Project engages in the following activities: counselling of abused women and children, public education, research on the extent of domestic violence and its relationship to HIV & AIDS, the attitude of the law and society on domestic violence as well as the impact of Musasa Project programmes on their clients, the government and society. The organisation also trains the police to be gender sensitive when handling cases of domestic violence and trains volunteer counsellors.

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<sup>2</sup> Tsanga A.S. Review of Women's Legal Rights Materials in Zimbabwe: Ministry of National Affairs, Employment Creation and Cooperatives (1996) Pg.12

### **1.3.3 Funding of Musasa Project**

The core business of Musasa Project is counselling, and all other programmes and activities are built on it. Currently a number of international organizations fund the Harare Office. These are The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Norwegian People's Aid (NORAD), Womankind Worldwide, Stephen Lewis and International Organisation for Migration (IOM), and each donor funds programmes that are in line with their area of interest. With regard to donor funding, the Overseas Development Institute states as follows,

*“In terms of donor-NGO funding arrangements, there are variations across countries. The dominant type of NGO activity funded by donors today remains projects and programmes put forward for funding by the NGOs themselves, and utilised for projects and programmes in particular developing countries”.*

Because of the nature of funding from all the above-mentioned organisations, activities are therefore fragmented because; each donor funds a component(s) of activities that are carried out by Musasa Project. There is the challenge of difficult and different reporting guidelines expected by each donor that are in some cases time consuming, Musasa Project maybe an independent organisation, but the direction that a programme may take is, in most cases, decided on by the funding partners<sup>3</sup>.

### **1.3.4 Statistics of Clients assisted by Musasa Project**

Musasa Project tackles violence against women in the private sphere. While it is recognised that men and boys may also be the target of domestic violence and women may also be the perpetrators of domestic violence, men constitute the vast majority of perpetrators. Work being done by Musasa Project is of paramount importance and the number of women who walk in to seek assistance is evidence to this. Below are tables that indicate the number clients who received crisis and on going counselling from Musasa Project in the last three years from 2005 to 2007.

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<sup>3</sup> The focus that the organisation and donor have maybe the same but the way a programme is operated is sometimes decided on by the funding partner

**Table 1. Crisis and Ongoing Counselling and Shelter Services 2005<sup>4</sup>**

Month	Phy/Psy	Eco	Inh	Rape	Other Issues
Jan	148	42	11	4	27
Feb	209	62	14	3	25
Mar	207	58	17	3	12
Apr	272	61	27	3	33
May	128	48	8	3	20
Jun	112	40	17	3	21
Jul	162	27	10	3	20
Aug	133	31	16	2	35
Sep	124	45	9	1	10
Oct	135	66	21	3	23
Nov	124	74	26	2	36
Dec	80	69	27	1	27

**NB** the other issues referred to are issues pertaining to abuses that may have taken place outside an intimate relationship, like sexual harassment at the workplace. For such clients, counselling services were still offered and the clients were then referred to other relevant organisations for redress.

**Table 2. Crisis and Ongoing Counselling and Shelter Services 2006**

Month	Phy/Psy	Eco	HIV	Inh	Rape/ Incest	Ret	L/drafts
JAN.	266	52	49	13	3	37	122
FEB.	281	79	65	11	3	51	134
MAR.	299	59	53	12	2	43	109
APR	309	60	73	13	3	66	143
MAY	237	46	42	4	2	54	100
JUN.	288	45	67	5	-	21	75
JUL.	215	45	26	5	-	35	146
AUG.	272	55	14	6	-	42	147
SEP.	213	52	24	6	4	39	133
OCT.	244	71	32	4	3	45	143
NOV.	262	76	25	17	3	52	136
DEC.	198	60	29		2	56	105

<sup>4</sup> Please note that one client can experience more than one type of abuse and the different abuses were recorded in each relevant column accordingly. Therefore, the numbers in the columns may not agree with the total number of clients assisted. The actual total number of clients who were assisted can be accessed in the Annual Counselling Record Book.

**Table 3 Crisis and Ongoing Counselling and Shelter Services 2007**

Month	Phy	Psyc	Eco	HIV	Rape	Inh	Tel	L. drafts
JAN	64	77	54	4	2	3	89	146
FEB	57	88	53	16	2	5	113	137
MAR	66	127	52	23	5	8	119	135
APR	43	71	35	20	6	6	129	127
MAY	53	115	50	14	6	7	121	–
JUN	28	95	56	8	1	7	102	123
JUL	35	91	48	12	6	5	117	117
AUG	56	116	57	19	6	12	132	138
SEPT	60	112	75	23	4	8	135	147
OCT	70	139	59	9	–	12	131	139
NOV	58	106	52	10	6	16	126	97
DEC	43	111	50	18	1	7	77	-

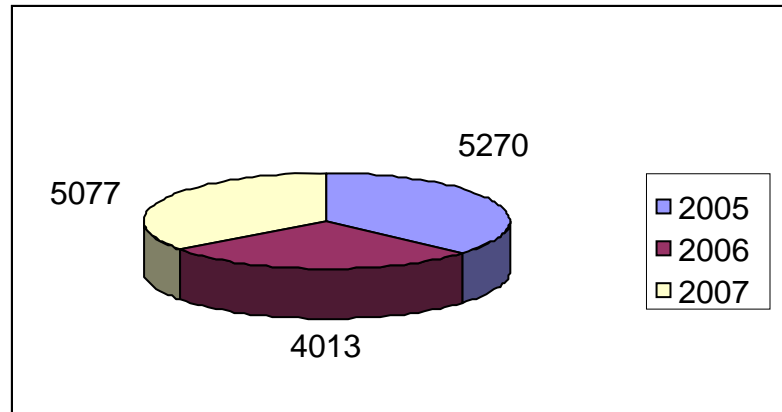
**KEY**

- PHYS – Physical abuse
- PSHC – Psychological abuse
- ECO – Economic abuse
- INH – Inheritance
- TEL – Telephone
- RET – Returning Clients
- L. DR – Legal Drafts

**NB** The rape referred to in the above tables is not only marital rape but also includes incest or rape by a close relative. It is also important to note that one client may have suffered some of, or all of the different abuses in the tables above.

Below is a diagram showing the total number of cases that were attended to by Musasa Project in the last 3 years from 2005 to 2007.

**Diagram 1 Total Number of Cases Attended to by Musasa Project from 2005 to 2007**



The above diagram shows an increase in the number of women that were assisted by Musasa Project in 2005 and Operation Restore Order, which displaced many families, attributed to this increase. Many people who were informal traders lost their means of livelihood as their businesses were destroyed and houses demolished. Many women bore the brunt of this exercise and cases of domestic increased. The statistics went down in 2006, but escalated again in 2007. I believe this was due to economic factors as well as public education programmes that the organisation carries out.

#### **1.4 Research Objectives**

The main objectives of the research were as follows: -

1. To assess the usefulness of counselling services offered by Musasa Project to survivors of domestic violence.
2. To find out the adequacy of shelter services offered to clients by Musasa Project
3. To analyse whether the legal services offered by Musasa Project are adequate
4. To assess the effectiveness of post follow up educational programmes offered by Musasa Project to survivors of domestic violence.



## **1.5 Research Assumptions**

The following assumptions informed the research: -

- 1(a) Women go to Musasa Project for counselling because they believe that the experts will solve all their domestic violence problems.
- 1(b) Providing counselling services only does not empower women to solve their domestic violence problems.
2. The prescribed periods and available room that clients can stay at the safe house and half way house for survivors of domestic violence do not seem to meet some of the clientele expectations.
3. Legal services offered by Musasa Project are limited and often do not adequately address the needs of survivors of domestic violence within their abusive relationships.
4. There are no adequate follow up programmes in place to assist survivors of domestic violence.

## **1.6 Research Questions**

Based on the above stated assumptions, this study sought to address the following questions: -

1. Are counselling services offered by Musasa effective in light of client expectations?
  - 1a. What other services can Musasa Project offer to build onto their counselling services?
2. Is the time frame adequate from the clients' perspective?
  - 3a. Do clients need alternative solutions besides counselling services offered to them?
  - 3b. Are the legal services offered by Musasa Project to clients adequate?
4. What nature of follow up programmes and services can Musasa Project offer to survivors of domestic violence?

## **1.7 Structure of the Dissertation**

This dissertation is made up of six chapters including the current chapter that contains the introduction, background to Musasa Project its vision and mission statements, objectives and assumptions of the study as well as the research questions. Chapter two deals with literature review, core values of counselling as well as legal and shelter services. Chapter three deals with the methodology, data collection methods and limitations of the study. Chapter four presents and analyses the research findings from interviews conducted and groups discussions. The last chapter contains conclusions drawn from the research and recommendations.

## CHAPTER 2

### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: A CAUSE FOR CONCERN

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter is devoted to review of sources of literature related to domestic violence and its effects on the battered women. Literature review allows the researcher to better understand the research problem in terms of the historical background, theoretical framework and the current research trends as this allows the researcher to attack the problem under investigation with deeper insight.

Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (DEVAW) (1993), defines violence against women as;

*“Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.”*

Article 3 of the same Declaration further states that women are entitled to the equal enjoyment and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field. These rights include, *inter alia*: -

- (a) The right to life;
- (b) The right to equality;
- (c) The right to equal protection under the law;
- (e) The right to be free from all forms of discrimination;
- (f) The right to the highest standard attainable of physical and mental health;
- (h) The right not to be subjected to torture, or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

#### 2.2 Perceptions on Domestic Violence

According to UNFEM in *Womankind* (2007:8),

*Domestic violence is as serious a cause of death and incapacity among women of reproductive age as cancer – a greater cause of ill health than traffic accidents and malaria combined. The economic cost of violence against women is considerable*

A report by the US Centre for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that the costs of intimate partner violence in the United States alone exceed US\$5billion per year. Being battered is torture! The situation is even worse for women who belong to societies where bride price is paid, as stated by Armstrong (1998) that, a battered woman knows that were she to go back to her home to express her anxiety and her misery she will just be reminded that *lobola* was paid for her. So where does she belong?

Domestic Violence occurs when a family member, partner or ex-partner attempts to physically or psychologically dominate another and it can also include cohabitants and non-married intimate partners. Domestic violence is caused by the underlying inequalities in society and the underlying causes are that the male partner in marriage believes that he has the authority and power and is allowed by society to use force. Most authorities seem to agree that abusive personalities result from a combination of several factors, to varying degrees. According to Dukes (1994),

*All domestic abuse relates to men's capacity for and their need to, devalue women and view them in negative ways. A causalist view of domestic violence is that it is a strategy to gain or maintain power and control over the victim.*

In some relationships, violence arises out of a perceived need for power and control, a form of bullying and social learning of abuse. Abusers' efforts to dominate their partners have been attributed to low self-esteem or feelings of inadequacy, unresolved childhood conflicts, the stress of poverty, hostility and resentment towards women, which is called misogyny.

Domestic violence is linked to the unequal distribution of power and the asymmetric social relations between men and women, which perpetuate the disdain of the feminine and its subordination to the masculine. Abuse can follow a common pattern and usually there is a cycle of abuse, which repeats

itself however, not everyone has the same experience. When torture is defined in binding instruments, it generally involves four critical elements:-

- severe physical and mental pain and suffering;
- Intentionally inflicted;
- For specified purposes:
- With some form of official involvement, whether active or passive.

The bottom line is that, domestic violence amounts to torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

According to Musasa Project Annual Report (2005:8),

*Violence against women in most cases conjures images of broken bones and marred faces. Rarely do people stop to think about the emotional/psychological scars that the violence creates especially when inflicted by one who is expected to love and nurture the individual.*

A lot of people think and believe that violence only relates to the physical aspect, but it should be noted that even psychological torture is violence and can equally cause damage to an individual's mental well being. What differentiates psychological violence from other forms of aggression and coercion is that the risk arises from the fact of being a woman. My experience in the counselling profession has revealed to me that most women in abusive relationships believe that as long as they are not subjected to **physical** violence, then there is no violence in the home. What is interesting though is the fact that, in some cases when the perpetrator refuses to talk to his partner (silent treatment), it is equally stressful to the client, only that there are no physical scars to show what the woman will be going through.

Like torture, domestic violence commonly involves some form of physical and, usually, escalating brutality. The suffering caused to women because of living in a relationship of battery is profound. The process of battering, whether physical or psychological or both, often produces anxiety, depression, sleeplessness and poor health.

It is recognized that there are women who use violence against men, and that there are men and women in same-sex relationships who use violence. The domestic violence scenario that this research focused on was a male-female relationship where the male abuses his female partner. I should hasten to add that any behaviour that harms or scares one's partner in an intimate relationship could be considered a crime by a court of law. While not all abuse is illegal, **it is always wrong**. Domestic violence is linked to the unequal distribution of power and the asymmetric social relations between men and women, which perpetuate the disdain of the feminine and its subordination to the masculine.

Musasa Project, as an institution that deals with cases of domestic violence, has the challenge to counsel the abused as well as empower them and the public with information about domestic violence and its negative effects.

### **2.3 Counselling and the Impact on Battered Women and the Law**

*"A problem shared is a problem solved!"* Matt Hartley (2005)

Wise words indeed, but it all depends upon with whom an individual shares the problems and what kind of help one gets from that person. Counselling is a growing international profession in the human service field. According to Makore and Maunganidze: (2000:4) state as follows,

*In Zimbabwe, professional counselling which is a fairly new phenomenon does not have the same professional status it has in other developed countries like the United States of America and United Kingdom and nearer to home in South Africa, because it is practised by individuals who counsel as a sideline to their profession such as teachers, nurses social workers and psychologists.*

Traditional counselling in the African context was usually done by family members who tried to solve the problems by exploring all different issues between the disputing parties. Although family counselling was and still is useful, families tend(ed) to apply traditional norms as their guideline, expecting both the husband and wife to fulfil traditional roles, Armstrong (1998:57) asserts that,

*Thus, while the man will be told not to hit his wife, the wife is also told to obey her husband...*

Modernisation and rural urban migration has diluted the traditionally strong family bonds because the dependence of family members on the family as a unit is weakening. That is one of the reasons why more people are turning to professional counselling. While the traditional way of counselling used to resolve issues was and still is effective, the problem is that the solutions are prescriptive while, on the other hand, the intervention methods that are used by professional counsellors is non-prescriptive and gives clients autonomy to make their own choices and decisions.

Pietrofesa et al., (1983:5) define professional counselling as,

*“A professional service offered by a competent counsellor who has the expertise to generate alternatives, help the client in loosening and breaking old patterns, facilitate the decision-making process as well as find viable solutions to problems”.*

Counselling, therefore, is a relationship between a professionally trained, competent counsellor and an individual seeking help in gaining greater self-understanding and improved decision-making and behaviour change skills for problems faced within a family environment. Counselling is carried out to assist a client to achieve greater levels of self-awareness and to actualise dormant behaviour.

Musasa Project is one of the very few organizations in Zimbabwe that employs qualified counsellors who offer direct professional counselling services to survivors of domestic violence.<sup>5</sup> The self-esteem of most clients who visit Musasa Project is very low and the counsellors have the challenge to make clients regain that self-esteem as well as **take responsibility** for their

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<sup>5</sup> Musasa Project does not train its own counsellors, but recognises certificates diplomas and degrees in counselling attained from other registered institutes

choices as well as own their decisions<sup>6</sup>. This approach is person-centred as Carl Rogers, postulates in Nelson-Jones (1995:19)

*“Every person has within herself ‘vast resources for self understanding, for altering her self concept, attitudes and self-directed behaviour and these resources can be tapped only if a definable climate of facilitative psychological attitudes can be provided. Empathy, congruence and unconditional positive regard are the facilitative psychological conditions that are necessary and sufficient for therapeutic change.*

It is a mutual enterprise on the part of the counsellor and the counselee and, as such, is based on respect for the individual and the main concern is to eliminate those self-defeating behaviours in the client. The whole process helps the client to gain a more positive view of self, accept self and others and becomes more open. This great openness allows for increased acceptance of one’s strengths, weaknesses as well as potential. The strength in the counsellor/counselee relationship is that, it is purely professional and the client has autonomy all the time unlike in situations where help can sometimes be prescriptive.<sup>7</sup>

Women may reach out to friends or family for help. When they do so, they can experience a variety of responses, ranging from the helpful to the utterly dangerous. However well-intended their help, friends or family may simply not know how to deal with the situation and may not be aware of the professional support and the legislative rights available.

Typical counselling processes progress through several phases. It begins with an assessment of what happened during the crisis and the individual's responses to it. This is the stage where the client gives an account of what

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<sup>6</sup> It does not necessarily mean that all the decisions and choices that clients make have a positive impact in their lives, but the important point is that the client owns those decisions.

<sup>7</sup> In a traditional family setting, if a woman is beaten by her partner and she seeks to use the family route of counseling, the challenge she may face if she decides to take legal recourse is that, it is wrong to report one’s partner to police as it can create more problems if the husband is arrested and it can even lead to divorce.



happened. According to Encyclopaedia of Mental Disorders, there are certain common patterns of response to most crises that a counsellor has to be alert to;

*An individual's reaction to a crisis can include emotional reactions (fear, anger, guilt, grief), mental reactions (difficulty concentrating, confusion, nightmares), physical reactions (headaches, dizziness, fatigue, stomach problems), and behavioural reactions (sleep and appetite problems, isolation, restlessness)*

Different people react differently to given situations and to this effect, the onus is on the counsellor to assess an individual's potential for suicide and other negative behaviours and thoughts one may have at a given time. A survivor can also turn into a perpetrator of violence and commit such crimes as murder, grievous bodily harm, malicious damage to property etc. In most cases, it is a reaction to abuse the woman may have suffered in the hands of her abuser before she lashed out in retaliation. In addition, information about the individual's strengths, coping skills, and social support networks is obtained.

Counselling is not an end in itself but it is a process. Musasa Project is a trauma walk-in-centre for battered women and therefore the counsellors mainly engage in crisis counselling intervention method in order to address the problem. Crisis is a state of disorganisation in which the client faces frustrations due to disruption to her life cycle or coping mechanisms. Crisis intervention has several purposes. It aims to reduce the intensity of an individual's emotional, mental, physical and behavioural reactions to a crisis. Individuals are more open to receiving help during crises.

A person may have experienced the crisis within the last 24 hours or within a few weeks before seeking help. Crisis intervention is conducted in a supportive manner. To this effect most clients especially those that suffer physical or sexual violence who walk through the doors of Musasa Project would have been abused within the time frame mentioned above. The length of time for crisis intervention may range from one session to several weeks,

with the average being four weeks. I must then hasten to say that crisis intervention is not sufficient for individuals with long-standing problems.

Because professional counselling is a new phenomenon for the traditional African woman, most of them have one off session. It should be noted however, that in the traditional setting, individuals and couples can also undergo one-off or a series of counselling sessions depending on the circumstances leading to the abuse. Another purpose of crisis counselling is to help individuals return to her level of functioning before the crisis. Below is an illustration of a case where crisis counselling was very necessary and helpful to a client and her legal practitioner:-

Maidei, a vegetable vendor, received divorce summons from her husband's lawyer and she came to Musasa Project to seek psychological as well legal assistance. The husband had moved out and was living together with another woman, and did not contribute anything towards the upkeep of the family. She was counselled and then referred to Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association (ZWLA) for legal services and representation.

She came back to Musasa Project one Thursday afternoon in the company of her lawyer (who was very angry with her client) and Maidei was in a state of hysteria. She wanted to commit suicide because, her lawyer wanted to renounce agency as she claimed that the client was not cooperating with her. The client was also accusing the lawyer of not representing her properly in the High Court because, she claimed that her husband still loved her and her lawyer was supposed to fight for reconciliation, not divorce.

It emerged that every time, when there was to be a court hearing, a day before their court hearing, the husband would go and spend the night at home with his family, and although he did not bring any food home, he expected the wife to feed him as well. The couple would engage in sexual intercourse and the husband would assure her that he would cancel the divorce proceedings the next day but this never happened.

The woman did not attend several court hearings and the lawyer who had to battle it out on the client's behalf during her absence<sup>8</sup> was fed up with the whole situation and decided to renounce agency. She informed the client who had bought poison (*rat-kill*), which she wanted to take in the lawyer's office and that is how they ended up coming to Musasa Project together.

On arrival, the client refused to get into the office because she felt that there was nothing else to discuss, as she just wanted to die. After some talking, she then agreed to come in, sit down and talk about her issues with her lawyer. The lawyer gave her side of the story and when it was the client's turn, all she could say was that the lawyer was not putting her interests first.

Sometimes women are their worst oppressors in that some perpetuate the values that oppress them.

*“Why do you want us to divorce, I have told you that we had sex the day before the court hearing and to me that means my husband loves me! What man has sex with a woman that he does not love? I have told you several times to that I want you to tell that Judge that my husband loves me, but you are refusing”*

The lawyer then informed her that the husband had indicated at the last hearing that he wanted the wife and their four children out of their house that they had built together and this really shocked and angered her. The challenge was to persuade the client to objectively assess her situation and read the 'writing on the wall', which was that, her husband was using sex as a tool to confuse her and he had hidden motives that would prejudice her. (He was aiming for a default judgement where he hoped the house would be awarded to him). The legal practitioner, who was equally emotional, and 'fed up with a client who refused to see reason' was also made to realise that the client was in a state of confusion and was not as empowered as she thought and believed, although she had been through some counselling before she was referred to her for assistance.

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<sup>8</sup> The woman would only go and see her lawyer sometime later just to hear what transpired in the Court

In the end, it was resolved that the lawyer would not renounce agency and the client would cooperate with her as well as attend all court hearing sessions. She also decided not to commit suicide<sup>9</sup> instead; she would direct her energy towards her business as well as claim maintenance for the minor children (something she had been refusing to do before because she thought that it would drive the man away permanently). This undertaking was very important because, suicidal behaviour is the most frequent mental health emergency. The intervention was important because a potentially disastrous situation was averted through counselling.

Musasa Project (2005:10) Annual Report reported that,

*In spite of all the problems that women undergo, it is worth noting that many are seeking redress in their situations after receiving information that empowers them to take responsibility for their lives.*

The goal of crisis intervention in this case was to keep the individual alive so that a stable state could be reached and alternatives to suicide could be explored. In other words, the goal was to help the individual reduce distress and survive the crisis. Suicide having been averted, focus was placed upon the counselee's developing new survival skills and eliminating ineffective ways of coping, such as withdrawal, isolation, and substance abuse. At the end of the session, both the client and her lawyer were in better emotional state of mind and the client was ready to face her problems and challenges in a more positive manner. Encyclopaedia of Mental Disorders: 2007 assert that,

*In this way, the individual is better equipped to cope with future difficulties. Through talking about what happened and the feelings about what happened, while developing ways to cope and solve problems, crisis intervention aims to assist the individual in recovering from the crisis and to prevent serious long-term problems from developing. Research documents positive outcomes for crisis intervention, such as decreased distress and improved problem solving.*

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<sup>9</sup> Counselling is not prescriptive. It is important to give empower a client so that she has autonomy to choose best alternatives that will enhance her coping skills as well as own whatever decision she may make.

Most clients who visit Musasa Project have one-off sessions. Some who come for subsequent counselling sessions do so because their problems are not solved after their first session and they are in need of further assistance.

Helping an individual to deal with their presenting situation realistically enhances one's quality of life as it promotes respect for human dignity, partnership, autonomy, responsible caring, personal integrity as well as social justice. The attributes mentioned above encourage the unfolding of human potential in therapy, education and beyond. Johnson in Van Dyk (2001:200) asserts that this structured conversation is aimed at facilitating a client's quality of life in the face of adversity.

#### **2.4 Code of Ethics for Counsellors**

Ethics are the code of conduct concerned with preventing the possibility of inflicting harm to other people in the course of a study. Hansen, Rossberg and Cramer (2000:6) define ethics as "moral philosophy that deals with making judgements, good or bad, proper or improper, approval or disapproval, right or wrong". Ethics provide guidelines for professional conduct when dealing with clients. They also focus on principles and standards that control relationships between individuals such as in counselling and they are defined by professional organisations.

According to Benedict K (1988:76) a code of ethics is,

*"A system of moral principles rules of conduct recognised in respect to a particular group, culture or class of human action. Code of ethics are moral principles and it is that branch of philosophy with values relating to the rightness or wrongness of certain actions and the goodness or badness of the motives and end results of such actions.*

Counsellors are guided by a code of ethics that form the foundation for ethical practice and they are expected to know, respect and follow the code of ethics in order to give maximum help to the client. Urombo (2000:16) states that Professional organisations that monitor counselling define expected behaviour

of counsellors. In Zimbabwe the Health Profession Council (HPC) is assisted by the Zimbabwe Psychological Association (ZPA) to develop ethics for psychologists and counsellors in collaboration with the affected professional associations.

The following are professional competencies that are expected of counsellors at Musasa Project :-

- Act with care and respect for individual and cultural differences and the diversity of human experience.
- Avoid doing harm in all their professional work, by accepting responsibility for their behaviour.
- Respect the confidences with which they are entrusted as well as maintain and respect confidentiality at all times.
- Promote the safety and well-being of individuals, families, communities.
- Seek to increase the range of choices and opportunities for clients.
- Be honest and trustworthy in all their professional relationships.
- Practice within the scope of their competence.
- Treat colleagues and other professionals with respect, as well as
- Take credit only for the work they have actually done

Overall, counsellors at Musasa Project should conduct themselves in a manner that brings credit and respect to their organisation as well as to the profession. Since Musasa Project has a social responsibility, it strives to comply with the law and encourage the development of policies that serve the interests of its clientele as well as that of society.

## **2.5 Importance of Ethics in Counselling**

Ethics are important because they relieve people inside the business from uncertainty about how they are expected to act and react. They do not waste time guessing at how the system works. People who know that they will be

treated with justice and fairness can get on with the job at hand rather than having to protect their own backs. Ethics allows people outside the business to identify positively with what the business is offering and what they can expect when dealing with it and it also offers transparency in crucial aspects of the business's arrangements. Vallance E. (1995) asserts that,

*It builds experience and an idea of good clear and clean practice in relations with all the stakeholders of the business and gets rid of the need for unsatisfactory, ad hoc responses to complex social and ethical issues.*

## 2.6 Core Values of Counselling

The core values of counselling are listed below: -

- Encourage the potential of the individual in becoming more real, in touch with his/her core or true self, and internally connected.
- Respect the other's reality and ability to choose how to be and to act. Clients come in with their experiences which should be taken into consideration.
- Acceptance takes place prior to judgment and discrimination.
- Experience over skills, theoretical understanding and wisdom is valued.
- Neither theory nor technique should impede an existential meeting in relating with clients.
- Truth is uncovered, perhaps created, by the relationship in therapy, not by the practitioner's theories.
- To honour these values requires the risk and struggle of wholehearted engagement.
- In counselling work, a holistic approach that involves and links mind, body and spirit is valued.
- The importance of spiritual and cultural sources and traditions as well as the teachings of counselling and psychotherapy is valued.
- To work compassionately with whoever seeks our help and will not exclude people on the basis of their race, colour, nationality, religion,

marital status, sexual orientation, gender, class, age, HIV status, disability or having dependants.

In counselling, everything is done with the best interests of the client in mind. The counselling profession does not allow helpers to be judgemental and prescriptive to clients and their problems. Counsellors are compelled to respect and recognise the core values of counselling, which form the basis of any professional counselling relationship which is client-centred. The values help to bring out the potential inherent in each individual no matter what problems he or she may be going through.

Pemberton and Pendergraft (1990) state that,

*The key to establishing a field's social reliance lies in development maintenance, interpretation and application of a meaningful Code of Ethics. For a person to be a professional, it means more than just showing signs that one is knowledgeable. Code of Ethics should be compatible with the expertise.*

The primary focus of a code of ethics in counselling is not to help people escape suffering, but rather to help them understand, respond to and use their suffering in ways that enable them to discover and enjoy otherwise untapped truths and resources. Although suffering is an inescapable part of human existence, it is not the source of people's psychological problems. The key is how clients choose to respond to the suffering.

## **2.7 Shelter Services**

For any organisation that offers counselling services, it is essential to offer confidential shelter services, which should be available to clients whose lives are threatened by their perpetrators. In the United States of America, California, Shelter, Second Stage Housing and Counselling Services of Huron, clients can stay in a safe house for one year or longer as indicated below,

*Our shelter has provided safe, temporary housing for victims of woman abuse and their children...and... women and children can live for one year Residents are offered individual and group counselling, as well as information on housing, legal aid, financial assistance, and job training. Residents benefit from a feminist analysis of woman abuse, an*



*empowerment model in supportive counselling and the understanding and support of the staff and other residents.*

Closer to home in South Africa, there is a facility known as Bopanang which means "supporting each other", located in Upington, Northern Cape Province. The Manager of the Bopanang Centre, Ms. Valerie Syster indicates that,

*...Upon arrival at the Centre, each woman receives shelter and counselling. "We then look for alternative accommodation for her and her children, if she cannot go back home". "If the perpetrator is her partner or husband, we also try to have separate counselling with him at some other neutral venue...Additionally; Bopanang is involved in ongoing work at a local male prison and at the juvenile correctional facility. Working with juveniles is especially rewarding, says Ms. Bernadette Ntoba, Counsellor at the Centre: "With the juvenile offenders, we concentrate on violence and how to handle conflict."*

Musasa Project established the country's first shelter for survivors of domestic violence in Harare in 1997. Musasa is attempting to establish a second shelter in Bulawayo for survivors of domestic violence in that area. The institution offers temporary shelter services to clients whose lives are in immediate danger of violence from their intimate partners. The clients can stay at the safe house for a maximum of two weeks and all they are fully provided for<sup>10</sup>. The half way house was opened for those clients who are gainfully employed and decide to leave their abusive partners but have no immediate accommodation. The period of stay is three months and the clients have to sustain themselves. During this transitional period clients have time to decide on their future and they have time to look for alternative accommodation.

A client who needs an extension make a request and the Director assesses the client's situation in consultation with the Shelter Matron and she (the director) uses her discretion whether to extend the period of stay. There is a code of conduct which each client is given to read and sign on admission and if she violates the code then she is immediately discharged. For example, clients are

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<sup>10</sup> The housekeeper cooks and cleans all the other facilities for them. The clients are expected to clean their rooms only.

not allowed to disclose the address of the safe house to relatives, friends as the chances of those people disclosing the address to the perpetrator are high, and this can lead to the perpetrator visiting the safe house and further abusing the client. It also puts the lives of staff and other clients at risk. If a client violates this rule, she is immediately discharged from the safe house.

Another challenge faced by Musasa Project is lack of financial resources to support women who may want to stay in the safe house for longer periods due to different reasons. As I mentioned earlier, the organisation is donor-funded and sometimes it is necessary to play to the funding partner's tune. If a donor is interested in outreach programmes then it is necessary to stick to the agreed programmes, as diverting from the original plans may create problems. (A donor may simply withdraw funding.)

There was a client who had been in the half way house for almost 1 year. She was a referral case from the International Organisation for Migration which was one of the funding partners for Musasa Project and was specifically providing some funds for the maintenance of the safe house. The organisation also paid for all expenses incurred by the client and they gave her pocket money.<sup>11</sup> Although she had been in the safe house for much longer than prescribed, the organization could not discharge her because there were other extenuating circumstances that needed to be considered before she could be reintegrated back into society.

When I spoke to this client, her main concern was not safety, but for Musasa Project to offer money for clients to start income generating projects as well as identifying markets places where they could go and sell their wares. Her needs and priorities were strikingly different from other clients' need for safety for themselves and their children as well as, food, immediate

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<sup>11</sup> The client who was a victim of human trafficking was being given a monthly allowance for her upkeep

accommodation etc. For other clients who were in the safe house and had experienced domestic violence, the need to move on with their lives was great.

*If one knows exactly what they want to do, then there is no need to stay in the institution for as long as three months. I think I have adequate funds to sustain my children and myself. I need to move on with my life. I am going to find a shop in Harare, transfer my wares from the other town where I used to live with my husband and move on with my life.*

However, this statement proved to be easier said than done, as the client indicated in another interview one month later. Alternative accommodation was proving to be difficult to find and her funds were running out due to the fact that the business which she used to run in another town was no longer viable as her estranged husband was taking all the money from the sales since he was also a partner.

*I have had to close shop because I am no longer benefiting from the business. My husband phoned me on my mobile phone the other day and told me that he was going to fix me if I did not go back to him... I am not going back to that man because he almost killed me and it traumatised my children.*

I came to the conclusion that Musasa Project’s practice of treating each case in isolation was good because although the women were all coming from abusive backgrounds, each individual’s experience and resources differed from the other, as well as the circumstances leading to their admission into the safe house. From the above scenario, one can safely say that shelter services are an essential part of the services that Musasa Project offers to survivors of domestic violence. Below is a table of the number of clients and children accommodated at Musasa Project from 2005 to 2007.

**Table 4** Statistics of Shelter Services offered to Clients: 2005 to 2007

Year	Number of women	Number of client’s Children	Number of Maids	Total Number of Inmates
2005	10	5	-	15
2006	38	22	-	60
2007	29	31	8	68

<sup>12</sup>The shelter accommodates women and children survivors of domestic violence whose lives are in danger<sup>13</sup>. The temporary shelter accommodates clients for a maximum of two weeks. Survivors at the temporary shelter are provided with necessities like toiletries, food, transport, medication and linen.

The half way house accommodates those clients who are gainfully employed who decide to leave their abusive partners to start a new life without the men, or to create space for themselves while they try to work out their problems with their abusive partners. They buy their own provisions and can stay in the safe house for a maximum of three months. There are referrals cases from other networking organisations of clients who also need shelter and the same rules of stay apply.

The Director uses her discretion to extend the period of stay for clients who may still need them. Reasons for staying in the safe house for longer than the stipulated periods vary from having no alternative accommodation or funding partners who also have clients (e.g. IOM who deal with cases of human trafficking), but use Musasa Project facilities. The challenge that Musasa Project faces is, over and above being funded by IOM for other activities at the shelter, the organisation makes sure that it also provides for its clients' upkeep. Due to the nature of cases the clients end up living at the half way house for much longer than the three months.

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<sup>12</sup> Data shown below for 2005 and 2006 was not disaggregated to indicate the number of clients and the number of childminders that were admitted and accommodated together with their employers who had sought accommodation at any given time.

<sup>13</sup> Musasa Project does not accommodate boy children who are over twelve years old because 12 years is a stress and storm stage where children want to experiment on a lot of things, sex included. Looking for alternative accommodation for the boy children sometimes creates serious challenges as it is difficult to find relatives, friends, or organizations that may accommodate the boy children.

## 2.8 Legal Services

Legal services are an essential part of the counselling process. If a survivor of domestic violence lacks information on the legal services that she can access, she is thrown into a dilemma and becomes even more confused. Johnsen (pg 19) defines legal aid as, “legal assistance in clarifying, avoiding, obtaining, utilising existing legal positions”. Concisely, legal aid is about helping clients to cope with the technicalities of the law. It involves taking instructions from empowered clients who are, it is assumed, in a position to make informed choices after they receive counselling. It also involves advising the clients, drafting legal process and litigation. Legal Services in Rural Areas (1997) assert that legal services involve more than just legal aid. The term encompasses training of paralegals, production of simplified legal materials, information dissemination, counselling mediation and negotiation. Neighbourhood Legal Services asserts that,

*Imagine, for a minute, the emotions involved in being victimized by domestic violence: fear, disbelief, and confusion. Add to this the often intimidating and frustrating experience of accessing relief through the legal system. Advocates for victims of domestic violence have long been aware that clients are frequently frightened as well as uninformed as to their legal options and the procedures involved in obtaining legal relief.*

Legal services enable women to access and utilise the justice system in Zimbabwe. Organisations are also able to document women’s experiences with the law. It enables the women to assert their rights and practically respond to difficulties so that, in the end, the rule of law prevails. Organisations who offer such services normally prioritise negotiation and conciliation as means of settling conflicts.

Musasa Project offers limited legal services to its clientele as it does not have a legal practitioner. The legal services include drafting affidavits for peace orders for women survivors of domestic violence. This service is very essential as it protects clients from further abuse in their homes. Domestic violence takes more than just a piece(s) of legislation to combat, but it is important to use the law wherever and whenever possible, because some

people really find morbid pleasure in terrorising their families in the homes. The organisation does not have a legal practitioner, hence, it gives limited legal advice as well as drafting of affidavits for peace orders.

## **2.9 Information Dissemination as a Strategy**

Information sharing is one aspect, which is very important when an organisation works with other stakeholders. By disseminating information about its activities, an organisation is able to get feedback from individuals and organizations. Musasa Project produces and disseminates information on domestic violence through workshop reports, quarterly and annual reports, flyers, brochures, bulletins, booklets etc. A lot of information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials on domestic violence, which are user friendly are prepared and disseminated to clients, partner organisations, service providers, policy makers, traditional and religious leadership as well as the public.

The institution has carried out a number of researches on domestic violence issues and the reports have been shared with relevant stakeholders. Musasa Project Annual Report (2006:4) reports that,

*Musasa Project has learnt that the logic of hard facts and statistics can convince people to think critically about issues thus we continued gathering statistics and engaging in research on gender violence and HIV & AID.*

The organisation has also taken a pro-active stance by strengthening the schools, colleges and universities on violence against women programmes to inculcate in the young the need to adopt non-violent ways of conflict resolution in relationships.

Musasa Project is committed to promoting women and girls' human rights. It managed to commission a research in Primary and Secondary Schools in 2005 on the effects of gender violence and child abuse to students and how it affects teaching and learning and to this end, a report was produced. The Project

targeted young people so that they could understand domestic violence as an abuse of women's rights.

The institution has also published a number of "I" stories that are quite empowering to women, as the stories give courage to other women who are in abusive relationships. The narrated experiences also help to empower those who are in potentially abusive relationships, because they are then able to identify signs and symptoms of abuse before the abuses actually happen.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Bentzon et al. (1998:79) state that, empirical research is not undertaken in a vacuum but is informed by a variety of factors. In this research, the existing theories on domestic violence and counselling services offered to survivors of domestic violence, as well as my own experiences, influenced my choice of perspectives and methodology. Three main methodological perspectives, namely, the grounded theory approach, legal pluralism and semi autonomous social fields informed the research. However, the overall methodological approach used in this study is the women's law approach.

#### **3.2 The Women's Law Approach**

This approach was chosen for this research because it takes women's experiences, realities, and not the law as a starting point for analysing the position of women in society. The use of this method, therefore, involved collecting information from women survivors of domestic violence to assess the adequacy of the counselling shelter and legal services, as well as education programmes that they received from offered by Musasa Project. In ascertaining the gendered aspect surrounding the social being of battered women from the community's perspective, the women's law approach also accommodates the social research method.

This method aims to draw from the experiences, opinions, knowledge, beliefs and attitudes of some of the individual members of the community, established institutions such as the police, courts as well as other networking organisations to establish the realities of the survivors from their own perspective. Through interaction between grounded theory an social research method, I realised that most survivors of domestic violence were caught between social attitudes, practices and the way law is applied in cases of domestic violence.



As Bentzon: et. al.(1998:93) describes,

*The strength of this woman centred approach is that it records and analyses female life-situations and values and reveals issues and dynamics that are seldom evident in the male dominated legal culture.*

Women's law approach recognises the existence of biological, social and cultural differences between men and women and the fundamental problem is that women's values and activities are subordinated to those of men by law and society. Beauvior (1949:20) asserts,

*Almost nowhere is her legal status the same as man's frequently it is much to her disadvantage. Even when her rights are legally recognised in the abstract long-standing custom prevents their full expression in the mores.*

The fact that, in a formal sense, women are treated as beings equal to men, whereas society actually treats women as lesser subjects, creates and is one cause of domestic violence, hence the need for counselling. From this approach, I was able to look at the experiences of battered women and what Musasa Project, as an institution, is doing to assist them with information and services related to problems of domestic violence.

### **3.3 Grounded Theory Approach**

Grounded theory as a key to the women's law research is a process in which data, theory, lived realities of women and perceptions about norms are constantly engaged with each other to help in deciding what data to collect and how to interpret it (Bentzon et al...1998). The methodology was helpful to me because it enabled me to get a clear picture of lived realities and experiences of women survivors of domestic violence, their expectations of services offered by Musasa Project and what the organization actually offered them. I was also able to identify gaps that exist between the law and the women's lived realities.

The impact of forces such as family, church, the community etc and factors such as finance, security etc. that control battered women's lives was also revealed in the research. The research revealed that in some cases women

were reluctant to leave their abusive partners because they were worried that their families, church or community members would label them as failures. It also gave me empirical evidence about women's lived realities and experiences. The issues of finance and security were major factors that stopped some women from leaving their partners. They expressed concern that they were afraid of facing the future without their partners, despite the abuse that they suffered at their hands.

### **3.4 Legal Pluralism**

Legal Pluralism is the interplay between general law and customary law. The term "customary law" means the customs and laws, which governed the indigenous peoples of Zimbabwe or any part of this community in pre-colonial times, and which still governs them in its modified and developed state.

In this research, it helped me to find out why women were battered in their homes by people who are supposed to be their intimate partners but were brutal to them. One unemployed client that came in for counselling had this to say about the reason why she could not go back to her family, although she had been brutally beaten by her husband for refusing to take into the home a minor child that he had had with another woman,

*Fathers are so greedy when charging lobola. I was sold like a cow!  
My husband uses that as a platform for battering me even more  
because he knows he is not going to get any opposition from my people.  
I have no voice in my own home I am just like one of the children.*

The gains made in terms of the general law in trying to protect women in abusive relationships are eroded by cultural and social values and practices, which condone domestic violence. The approach also helped me why women who suffer marital rape do not report their partners. Reporting marital rape to the police (which is a human right and is enshrined in the Codification Act), is customarily tantamount to filing for divorce.

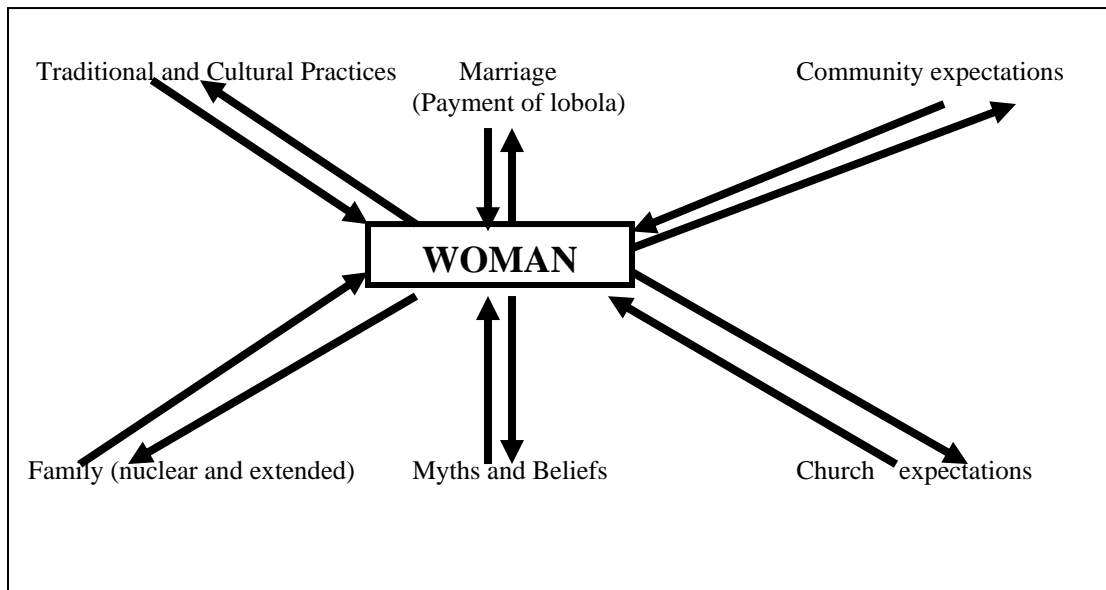
### 3.5 Semi Autonomous Social Fields

This enabled me to take into consideration other rule-generating and enforcing bodies that have an impact on women who live in abusive relationships. It revealed that women are under pressure from different actors within their marriages and families. The conceptual framework below clearly brings out what pressures a woman endures and hence the need for counselling so that she is in balance with her situation.

The diagram below illustrates what other external but powerful arms of society a woman has to deal with. All the forces have both positive and negative impacts on the woman.

**Diagram 2**

**Conceptual Framework: Pressure that Impacts on an Abused Woman**



The woman is the centre of controversial conflict within herself as well as with other regulatory forces within the community that affect her response to abuse within a relationship. She has to deal with all external forces that sometimes contradict her beliefs as well as the law. She is also answerable to all those people who, in most cases, simply expect her to conform to their

norms and values without really considering her feelings and how those expectations impact on her rights as a human being.

Semi autonomous Social fields helped me to examine those regulatory forces within the community that affect the response of women in abusive relationships. They are not normally bodies that are created by law, but are very influential in that they impinge on the reactions of women to certain situations. For example, one woman's reaction to the suggestion that she could report her HIV husband to the police for raping her, was as follows:

*“How can I report my lawful wedded husband to the police? That is unheard of! He told me several times that he paid lobola and he can do anything to me”*

My research revealed that abused women used the extended family, friends and institutions to solve their problems and these included, aunts, uncles, grandparents, chiefs and church. Some of the semi autonomous social fields systems were very helpful in assisting the abused women. What hindered their assistance in most cases, however, was the fact that they would not allow the abused women to seek legal redress, for example, report cases of domestic violence to police, apply for a peace orders, claim maintenance etc. The major reason why women visited Musasa Project was to find out how they could get help without disturbing the status quo.

### **3.6 Data Collection Methods**

Qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques were used for data collection. The quantitative research methods were used to obtain statistical data on the number of respondents interviewed and the qualitative research methods were used throughout the research in collecting data from respondents by engaging in one-on-one interviews with respondents as well as group discussions.

### **3.6.1 Case Study Approach**

This approach is an empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon within its real-life context. Case study research means single and multiple case studies, which can include quantitative evidence, relies on multiple sources of evidence and benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions. Yin (2002), notes that, case studies should not be confused with qualitative research and points out that they can be based on any mix of quantitative and qualitative evidence. This approach assisted me to get information about the operations of Musasa Project from the key informants, i.e. the director and some Programme Officers on the organisation's operations. They spoke to me freely because I am a member of the organisation and offered a lot of information that I needed for my research, The outcome of the research would assist in identifying and addressing gaps. I was also able to find out what kind of assistance they offered to survivors of domestic violence as well as their relationship with government and other stakeholders and what challenges they faced in their course of their duties.

### **3.6.2 Key Informants Interviews**

Key informants included the Director Musasa Project, the Public Education Officer, the Shelter Matron, the Paralegal Officer, Counsellors, Clerk of Magistrates Court, one Officer from Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association (ZWLA) and one Programme Officer Padare (Men's Forum). The Musasa Project director and officers were intended to give insights into the operational framework of the organisation. The Clerk of Court was chosen to give information on how clients who had been assisted by Musasa Project asserted themselves as compared to those that did not have assistance from any professional organisation when they sought legal assistance on cases of maintenance, peace orders, and child custody among other things. The officer from ZWLA was also chosen to give feedback on how clients referred to them dealt with their cases as compared with those that sought their help without prior counselling by Musasa Project. The Officer from Padare was intended to

shed light on how they, as a man's organisation that also sometimes deals with cases of domestic violence, viewed Musasa Project as a networking partner. Shown below is a table of showing people who were interviewed: -

**Table: 5**                      **TABLE OF INTERVIEWED RESPONDENTS**

<b>KEY INFORMANTS</b>		
<b>RESPONDENT</b>	<b>Number of people Interviewed</b>	<b>Total Number people Interviewed</b>
Musasa Project Director	1	1
Clerk of Court	1	1
ZWLA Legal Officer	1	1
Padare Officer	1	1
Paralegal Officer Musasa Project	1	1
<b>Total number of key informants interviewed</b>		<b>5</b>
<b>INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP INTERVIEWS</b>		
In depth interviews	30 former and new client	30
Group discussions 1	12 women in the group	12
Group discussion 2	8 women in the group	8
<b>Total number of Interviewees</b>		<b>50</b>

### **3.6.3 In depth interviews**

The in depth interviews were carried out to elicit experiences of the battered women on the challenges they faced and how Musasa Project assisted them in dealing with their situations. This approach allowed me to interview women different classes of women who had experienced different forms of abuse and what impact the counselling and other services they had received from Musasa Project had on their lives.

### **3.6.4 Focus Group discussions**

Group discussions were used to obtain information about the experiences of women on domestic violence and their opinions on the services offered by Musasa Project. Two groups of 10 women per group were held at Musasa Project Offices. Women were very eager to voice their opinions on the services offered by the organisation and what more they expected.

### **3.6.5 Passive Observations**

I observed how the Security Officer received clients by just sitting at the reception area<sup>14</sup>. The clients were passed on to the receptionist who would record their names, addresses, as well as the time of entry before being ushered into the waiting room where they would be helped on a first come first serve basis by the counsellors. I used this method of data collection in order to assess how user friendly the environment was for the clients from the point of entry up to the point that they left the institution and how long it took clients to get assistance.

### **3.6.6 Library Research**

The purpose of the library research was to ascertain what other writers say about domestic violence and counselling services in their countries. Commentaries were read to ascertain the views of experts and general individuals on the efficacy of counselling shelter and legal services offered by Musasa project to survivors of domestic violence and its impact on society. Because domestic violence is a global problem affecting everyone, I considered both international and local texts on the phenomenon. This method helped me to identify the gaps that existed between what was advocated in the written literature and what was practised on the ground. It enabled me to look

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<sup>14</sup> Musasa Project hired a Security Officer who makes sure that the gate is always locked and vets people who walk through their gates. This is because staff as well as clients previously experienced threats from men who followed their spouses or relatives that they had abused at their homes to the office. In most cases it was a way for intimidating the women not to go ahead with whatever action the women may have decided to take.

for ways of filling the gaps provisions for change to improve the situation for women.

### **3.7 Limitations of the Study**

Musasa Project has three offices in Zimbabwe, but the Harare Office is the only one that has a safe house. Although the other two offices in Gweru and Bulawayo offer counselling shelter and legal services, they refer clients to shelters that belong to other organisations. The Programme coordinators in charge of those offices have no direct control of managing activities at these safe houses. The limitation therefore is that the issues that emerged on shelter services only reflect on the services that Musasa Project offers in their Harare Office and not the other two offices in Gweru and Bulawayo.



## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS, ANALYSIS AND THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

#### 4.1 Introduction

Women rights are human rights! In addressing problems that arise in cases of domestic violence, it is important to take cognisance of the fact that domestic violence is complex and therefore difficult to monitor and regulate, however, this should be no excuse for abuse. There is a need to discard the belief that domestic violence is a private matter. Too many people continue to believe that domestic violence is a private matter between a couple, rather than a criminal offence that merits a strong and swift response.

In an abusive relationship, the abuser may use a number of tactics other than physical violence in order to maintain power and control over his or her partner: Survivors of domestic violence recount stories of put-downs, public humiliation, name-calling, mind games and manipulation by their partners. Many say that the emotional abuse they have suffered has left the deepest scars. Even today, the survivor of a domestic assault runs the risk of being asked the question,

*"What did you do to make your husband angry?"*

This question implies the survivor is to blame for this abuse. People in our criminal health and justice system police, prosecutors, magistrates and judges, need to be educated about the role they can play in curbing acts of domestic violence. As Roxburgh (1991:143) explains,

*Blaming the survivor, reinforces the abused woman's low self-esteem . . . ; can contradict her interpretation of the violent situation and distort her version of what is happening...can weaken her resolve to act because she feels responsible for and therefore deserving of the violence; makes her feel undeserving of other assistance; diminishes the capacity of the service provider to offer assistance which, will be of real benefit to the woman; and is untrue."*

Understanding of the differences in the gendered identity of men and women is crucial to elucidating why family violence occurs, and to replacing the common myths about the causes of family violence with a stronger knowledge of who benefits from its continual perpetration. Chirume, in Taylor and Stewart (1991) states that,

*Traditionally wife beating has been considered an appropriate way of correcting a woman's behaviour...moderate beating of a wife is not considered wrong or questionable under customary law. Even when cases are brought to light, domestic crimes are difficult to prosecute. All too often victims are so terrorized that they fear for their lives if they call the police.<sup>15</sup>*

#### **4.1 International Human Rights**

Human Rights are universal but the level of application varies from country to country. Zimbabwe ratified CEDAW in 1991 and Article 1 of the Convention clearly outlaws all forms of discrimination against women at all levels. Article 16 directs State Parties to remove discrimination against women in the context of marriage and family relations so that women and men are treated equally and fairly. Unfortunately the government of Zimbabwe has not domesticated CEDAW, but endeavoured to a certain extent to upgrade women's rights by incorporating parts of CEDAW into existing legislation. A cause for concern though, is the fact that Zimbabwe government last sent its report on Human Rights to the United Nations Human Rights Committee in March 1998, which is ten years ago!

CEDAW General Law Recommendation 19 (1992) states that, States should include information on domestic violence and measures to deal with it in their reports and yet State organs like the courts and police do not publish the statistics on domestic violence. Musasa Project, as an interested NGO, reports cases of domestic violence, but it is not enough, as the numbers they may

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<sup>15</sup> In Zimbabwe even though the Domestic Violence and Protection Act was enacted, the arms of law that are supposed to use the piece of legislation have no yet been trained and there are no regulations in place to guide them when cases of domestic violence come to light.

publish in their reports are not a true reflection of the national picture. Compilation of statistics and research are important, as they expose domestic violence in its raw forms. Musasa Project created a database on GBV statistics. The Police are one of the database's major stakeholders and originally agreed to add its national statistics. For reasons best known to the Police, however, these statistics have not been forthcoming. This kind of attitude from the State organ defeats the conventions and treaties that the government ratified and is a violation on the right to information to its citizens which is enshrined in Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa Article (5) (a), which provides that:

*Creation of public awareness in all sectors of Society regarding harmful practices through information, formal and informal education and outreach programmes*

Domestic violence is a harmful practice! Government is still challenged to improve its drive to promote awareness of the scourge, which needs to be curbed through: the implementation of enacted laws; the carrying out of public education and outreach programmes which will not only raise awareness but will also help to change its communities' negative attitudes about domestic violence issues. Although NGOs are working with communities to curb domestic violence, government should take a central and leading role of coordinating and working with those organisations that are working to reduce this harmful practice. The other problem is that there is a great deal of suspicion of NGOs by government who believe that some, if not, all such organisations are funded by western countries who have a hidden political agenda and are working with the country's opposition parties.

Section (5) (c) of the same article provides that,

*Provision of necessary support to victims of harmful practices through basic services such as health services, legal and judicial support, emotional and psychological counselling as well as vocational training to make them self-supporting.*

Full implementation of CEDAW requires positive measures by the government to eliminate violence, because domestic violence impairs or

nullifies, among other rights, the right to life. Government therefore, needs to implement laws to support and protect survivors of domestic violence and NGOs like Musasa Project should be playing a complimentary role to support those laws that promote the well-being of the woman.

The lack of implementation of laws to support and protect survivors of domestic violence to promote gender equality in relationships is a violation of the Protocol to the African Charter Article (8) (d) which provides that law enforcement organs at all levels should be equipped to effectively interpret and enforce gender equality rights. This means that, Zimbabwe government needs to observe universal human rights, especially given the impact of globalisation and it should be held responsible to the international community. According to CEDAW General Recommendation 19, States may be responsible for private acts if they fail to act with due diligence to prevent or punish acts of violence.

Netsai was beaten by her husband when she went to his workplace to find out why he had stopped coming home. She also needed money to pay school fees for the children who were no longer going to school. When she reported the assault to the nearby Police Station, the man was not charged with assault, but instead they were told that they should go and discuss the problem at home like civilised people.

Netsai complained:

*It was so painful and embarrassing to be beaten and called names in public and in front of my children and to be told that I was no longer fit to be his wife as he had found someone who was much better than me in looks and in bed!.*

The Police Officer told Netsai to stop following the husband to his workplace as it was embarrassing for the man. The above action by the man and the Police Officer also contradict the African Charter Article 3 (1) (2) on the right to dignity and respect. The behaviour is also discriminatory and a violation of one's constitutional rights.

### 4.3 Legal and Constitutional Rights in Relation to Domestic Violence

Constitutions are there to protect citizens of a country. The dual system in most Southern African countries, codified state law and customary law, add to the complexity of progressive law reform in Southern Africa. Despite the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development making specific provision for “changing social practices which still subject women to discrimination,” and CEDAW referring to “taking all practices which constitute discrimination against women’, women in Southern Africa still find themselves at the mercy of customary law and practices that perpetuate their inferior status in society. Moolman states that, in virtually every country, there are contradictions between customary law and codified law when it comes to women’s rights and these contradictions are not addressed in Constitutions.

Zimbabwe, like other former colonial States, has a dual system of law, customary and general law. Both systems are recognized in the Constitution of Zimbabwe. Gaps still remain between the benefits intended for women enshrined in the Constitution, those sought to be achieved in terms of subsequent reforms to the law and the benefits actually experienced by women.

Section 23 (1) of the Constitution of Zimbabwe states,

*... a law shall be regarded as making a provision that is discriminatory and a person shall be regarded as having been treated in a discriminatory manner if, as of result of that law or treatment, persons of a particular description by ...sex, gender, marital status ... are prejudiced ...*

This section of the Constitution clearly shows that it does not allow discrimination in the private sphere and the private domain, but the same private domain is dominated by customary practices. Wife beating is one good example. Armstrong (1998:56) asserts that, written records of Shona traditional law state that a wife may complain if her husband hits her unreasonably or excessively:

*A husband is entitled to beat his wife moderately when the circumstances warrant such a punishment. Occasional disciplinary*

*actions of this kind are, in fact, regarded as normal incidents of married life to which a woman will not seriously object. However, a woman is not expected to submit to her husband's wantonness, and she may complain to his family or the court when he has beaten her excessively or unreasonably...*

One is then left to wonder what circumstances allow a man to beat his wife and what is considered a moderate beating? Unfortunately, the Constitution is indirectly guilty of condoning such a practice. Section 23 (3) (b) of the Constitution, which upholds customary law, is evidence of that and it is in direct contradiction to Subsection (1).

In a nutshell, customary beliefs and practices render some sections of the Constitution ineffective and women pay the price. Payment of *lobola*, as a customary practice, gives ultimate power to the husband in the home and it causes untold suffering to women who have no negotiating power on sexual issues as they are often routinely subjected to unprotected sex and marital rape, which exposes them to HIV & AIDS. This is a subject that I will not, however, delve into in this research.

Although Musasa Project may provide counselling, shelter and legal services as well as education for its clientele, all their intervention programmes come to naught when the customary laws and practices take precedence over general law. The following statement is a good example. It is of a client who suspected that the partner with whom she had lived with for the past ten years was having a relationship with another woman who was known in the community for her promiscuity:

*My aunt told me that there is nothing called rape in a marriage and a 'proper' and dignified woman does not use a condom with her husband. A condom is only used with a prostitute outside and not within a marriage<sup>16</sup>.*

According to the findings, legal pluralism in Zimbabwe creates disharmony between general and customary law which, in turn, foments domestic

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<sup>16</sup> Although this woman was in a living together relationship, she considered herself as good as married to her partner because of the number of years that they had lived together.

violence. The research revealed that Musasa Project's interventions were sometimes challenged as it was not considered 'customary' for women to take legal action against domestic violence offences which are criminal under general law but entirely condoned under customary law. General Law is made up of legislation and common law and since it is documented, there is generally little difficulty in determining its content. Customary law, on the other hand, is "living law" and is not recorded because its content effectively lives and exists in the mind and behaviour of the people it governs.

In spite of its entrenched guarantees against non-discrimination, the Constitution presents some weaknesses, since it recognizes customary law and practice, which subordinates women to men and this creates a climate for domestic violence perpetrated against them. The anti-discrimination clause under article 23 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe sanctions discrimination under customary law or personal law. It is well known that most of the discrimination against women occurs in the area of personal law and customary law, given the fact that Zimbabwean society is patriarchal. Some human rights are compromised by legal pluralism. Section 23 (1) of the Constitution of Zimbabwe states,

*... A law shall be regarded as making a provision that is discriminatory and a person shall be regarded as having been treated in a discriminatory manner if, as of result of that law or treatment, persons of a particular description by ...sex, gender, marital status ... are prejudiced ...*

Section 23(3) upholds the customary law to determine family issues and this prejudices women, as it is a direct contravention of sub section (1) of the Constitution. To re-iterate my findings, legal pluralism in Zimbabwe accordingly creates disharmony that leads to domestic violence and Musasa Project's interventions are sometimes challenged as the general law is compromised. Women in abusive relationships have no bargaining power and their sexual and reproductive rights are therefore largely compromised.

By getting married, women give up their rights. PANOS/SAFAIDS/UNAIDS (2002) state that men have considerable power in sex; they are seldom criticized for having several sexual partners. Culturally and socially, men are usually expected to take the lead in sexual matters and they often expect to have their sexual demands met even through marital rape. Which can lead to disaster where STIs or HIV & AIDS can be easily transmitted to the wife or the husband (or other wives assuming that it is a polygynous union).

It was quite disturbing to note that although the abused women who visited Musasa Project were counselled and informed about their rights, most of those interviewed found it very difficult to leave their abusive spouses because of the aspect of *lobola* having been paid for them. The practice of a husband “paying” for his wife affects the power dynamic within the marriage. It is common to hear women attribute their inferior status within marriage to the fact that they have been “bought”. Consequently; many women have little power in the marriage to negotiate for safer sex.

Women are raped in the name of marriage, but there are very few cases of marital rape that went to trial in Zimbabwe, like the H vs. H, but the irony here is that the couple was separated pending divorce. For those women that live together with men, it is very difficult for them to challenge their partners’ sexual behaviours.

Norma was traumatized because her husband of twelve years had raped her the previous night. He had herpes and what made the situation very traumatic was that he did not use any protection at all. She had washed herself seven times since the incident. She went to New Start Centre, got tested for HIV & AIDS and was then referred to Musasa Project for counselling.

*How can I report my husband to the Police? It is unheard of! What law can allow me to report my lawfully wedded husband of marital rape when he paid lobola for me? What I only came here for is for you to counsel me and then I will proceed to Parirenyatwa hospital for what they called Post Exposure Prophylaxis.*



The National Gender Policy (2004) Section 6.2.3, recommended for the following: -

- Prohibition of gender violence in general but more specifically on violence against women and children and
- Incorporation of the provisions for International Human Rights Instruments i.e. (CEDAW) into domestic violence law.

While the recommendations are good and well meant, the problem is they remain firmly confined to paper and there is very little on the ground to show that the Zimbabwe government is committed to eradicating domestic violence and promoting the status and welfare of women.

#### **4.4 The Efficacy of Counselling**

Counsellors and counsees have expectations of each other, which need to be met. Counselling is a helping relationship between a counsellor and client who has problems coping with a problem/problems. It is carried out to assist a client to achieve greater levels of self-awareness and to actualise dormant behaviour. It is all about empowering someone to make the choices that they can live with in life. It is not about counsellors telling their clients what to do about their problems, but it is about informing clients about the different options that clients have, whether positive or negative, and the empowered client makes her own choices about the way forward.

My first assumption was that women go to Musasa Project for counselling because they believe that the experts will solve all their domestic violence problems. The women that I spoke to had different opinions, but the bottom line was that they all appreciated the counselling services that the organisation has to offer.

Musasa Project staff has been accused of influencing women negatively, and this accusation has come mainly from men who believe that women who work for Musasa Project are of loose morals or are divorced and want to destroy other women's relationships. If the organisation is guilty of anything, it is

guilty of empowering abused women by informing them of their rights and encouraging them to stand up to their abusers. This empowerment process is part of the counselling process.

Interviewed clients expressed gratitude to Musasa Project who empowered them through the counselling process. They also indicated that the process of counselling gave them a chance to unload their burdens freely in a safe and conducive environment where the counsellors were empathetic and did not judge them. The process of talking about one's problems is therapeutic in itself.

Some individual clients unfortunately believed that Musasa Project could solve any problems that any woman had with her partner including those that were of a legal nature, as testified by one woman who expected Musasa Project to arrest her husband for beating her the previous night. She exclaimed:

*I have come to report my husband!*<sup>17</sup>

One client wanted to be assisted with money to buy foodstuffs for her children because her husband was refusing to give her money to buy food for the family.

*I expected Musasa Project to give me money to buy food for my two children, but I was disappointed when the counsellor told me that she could not help me with some money. At first I was very angry because I was expecting her to just tell me that Musasa Project would help me with some money to buy food or alternatively give me food to go and cook for my children.*

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<sup>17</sup> Some women who come to 'report' their abusive partners truly believe and expect Musasa Project officers to phone and instill fear in their perpetrators or even summon them to Musasa Project Offices and instruct them to stop abusing their partners again or else they would have them arrested by the police. In most cases, the clients themselves would not have reported the matter to the police

It was only after the counselling session that the client appreciated the role played by Musasa Project counsellors. She said:

*Now I appreciate the importance of just talking to someone who is receptive to my opinion and is prepared to make me realise the effects of my thinking and actions.*

Some women were disappointed when they learnt that Musasa Project does not give money for income generating projects. The Project-part of the name was confusing to them and made them believe that they could borrow money to start small businesses. One woman said:

*If you do not give money to your clients who are suffering and do not have money to start income generating projects then what do you think you are doing as Musasa Project to economically empower women?*

Although some interviewees did not say so in such words, most the women that I interviewed as individuals and even those that I discussed with in the focus group discussions believed that Musasa Project was able to 'fix' abusive men. For example, an interviewee said:

*...I also wanted Musasa Project to arrest my husband and evict him from our marital home, but I was disappointed when the Paralegal Officer informed me that this could only be done legally. I was very disappointed when I was told that the organisation does not arrest people for non financial support to their dependants and they only work in partnership with the Zimbabwe Republic Police Victim Friendly Officers who intervene where cases of domestic violence occur in different locations.*

All the clients that I interviewed said that they were happy with the counselling services that Musasa Project offered to its clients. Because in most cases when there were misunderstandings within a relationship leading to the abuse, the woman was expected to use the family or church to try to resolve issues with her husband. Talking to strangers like counsellors at Musasa Project was taboo because, as one client put it,

*Just the process of counselling is empowering. In our culture, we are told to keep quiet, be strong and silently endure adversity. When I got married, I was told that a woman of virtue does not 'expose her armpits'. She never talks to outsiders about her family problems.*

As can be seen from the above evidence, counselling is helpful. On the assumption that providing one-on-one counselling services alone does not

empower women to solve their domestic violence problems, the research revealed that clients needed Musasa Project to help them form something like 'empowerment' or 'peace clubs'. They suggested that they could meet about once a month and have experts come to talk to them about different issues, such as inheritance, maintenance, divorce, peace orders, grooming, etc. The members would then go on to invite friends to the meetings and those interested would join the clubs. This, they said, would go a long way in building their knowledge base about different issues that affect them in their daily lives, as well as build their self-esteem. They would also be in a position to exchange helpful information with each other and even learn to help each other fight abuse collectively. One woman summed this up perfectly when she said:

*One time I attended a workshop on domestic violence that Musasa Project conducted for task force members in my community and I must say that after the two day workshop I felt empowered and I am now able to stand up to my husband who used to abuse me verbally. This is because I now know the different types of abuse and I know that abuse is a violation of my human rights.*

If these sorts of clubs and programmes were organised in different communities by women and, where appropriate, by men as well, they would benefit more members of those communities rather than just those who are currently assisted by Musasa Project on a one-to-one basis. The fact is that, for various reasons, not all women are able to go to Musasa Project for counselling. Many women who are in abusive relationships are simply forbidden to go anywhere without the permission of their partners, as one woman indicated below:

*It is not always possible to visit your offices when one is abused because in my case, although I had bus-fare, my partner forbade me to board a bus or a kombi without his permission. He had some men that he paid watch the house during his absence. The men would monitor my movements tell him what I did. I could have gone to see a peace club member if there was one because he was not strict about me visiting friends in the locality.*

#### **4.5 Follow up Counselling Services**

Follow up counselling services are important as they allow you to get helpful feedback from the clients that access your services. This feedback, which involves a process of sharing observations, concerns and suggestions between persons, divisions of the organization as well as the clients, helps to improve both personal and organizational performance. As mentioned earlier in the research, Musasa Project is a walk-in trauma centre. Clients, however, were deprived of follow up services since the organisation has no mandate to visit their clients in their homes, so as to give further expert advice as a follow up service after the first sessions.

On the assumption that there are no adequate follow up programmes in place to assist survivors of domestic violence, it emerged that Musasa Project does not have the financial resources to phone or visit clients after counselling sessions. Clients indicated that counselling services alone in the absence of any follow up sessions was not in the best interests of clients. In most cases, the counsellors did not know the fate of their clients after they came for the one-off counselling sessions. Some may have even died after visiting Musasa Project and being 'empowered'. When one of my interviewees mentioned this point, a case that I had handled came to mind.

Agnes came in one Monday afternoon for counselling. She needed help because she had been date raped by her boyfriend who had detained her overnight. She had reported the matter to Police the next morning and they opened a docket on rape charges. Client alleged that one of the police officers knew the young man and that he came from a prominent family. The officer alerted the rapist's family about the charges and the parents quickly contacted Agnes. They told her that they wanted to have an out of court settlement. She referred them to her aunt who lived in another town because her parents were out of the country. They agreed on the amount and the aunt told her to go and pick up the money from the perpetrator's sister's office. When she got to the office on Friday afternoon, she was given a cheque and was immediately arrested for extortion by police who had been called in. She spent the weekend in the cells and was only released after her brother had paid bail for her. She came straight to Musasa Project and I counselled her. I then went on

to contact Victim Friendly Unit to find out why the extortion charges had now taken precedence over the rape charges that she had made first. This time the police followed the correct procedure on the rape charges. The next thing that I heard was that my client had been waylaid on her way home from the shops by some men suspected to have been hired by the rapist and beaten thoroughly. She died a few days later because of wounds sustained from the assault. I only got to know about it when the officer that I had been dealing with phoned and casually told me that my client was dead. I was devastated because there had been no communication with the client after she had been referred to police.

While referral systems are good, it should not be seen as an end in itself. There is need to follow up clients even after the counselling sessions. Most clients who return for follow up sessions do so of their own accord. Rudo, a former client was received counselling and was accommodated at the safe house after she left her husband with a broken nose. She was discharged two weeks later. I was surprised to learn that on discharge from the safe house, she had not gone to her parents' house as she had indicated, but instead she went back to the abusive partner and he was now no longer physically violent. Now he was now psychologically and sexually abusing her by giving her the silent treatment and refusing to have sex with her for long periods.

*Musasa Project seems to concentrate on crisis counselling. They have no follow up programme which specifically target clients who would have been assisted. Instead of having one off counselling sessions, Musasa Project should have their own follow up programmes for their old clients because the clients need moral support even after they have been counselled. In this case Musasa doesn't even know the fate of their clients after one or two sessions. Clients need a variety of empowerment programmes (especially when they are admitted into the safe-house) which can help to equip them with knowledge on handling different social issues. I am an emotional wreck in my own marriage and home!*

Clients who live in and outside Harare were failing to access counselling services, as well as information on domestic violence and this negatively affected their knowledge of domestic violence. The research also revealed that some women, although empowered with information on domestic abuse, still tolerated it in the name of religion and/or tradition.

*“My church does not recognise a thing called domestic violence. My husband is in charge of everything in our home and if I do not obey him, he has a right to correct me even if it means beating me”.*

Norma was also traumatized because her husband of twelve years had raped her the previous night. The man had herpes on his penis and had raped his wife. What made it worse was that he did not use any protection at all. She had washed herself seven times since the incident. She went to New Start Centre, was tested for HIV & AIDS and was then referred to Musasa Project for counselling.

*The husband is the ultimate power in the home. I am there to serve him, thus I could not refuse him sex because he wanted it! What I only came here for is for you to counsel me and then I will proceed to Parirenyatwa hospital for what they called post exposure prophylaxis.*

Cynthia (an Agriculture Extension Officer) married a man who was violent to her since they started living together as husband and wife. Their marriage was registered under the general law. The violence got worse when she fell pregnant. She left him after 6 months of abuse. She later gave birth to a baby boy who is now 4 years old. Her husband refused to accompany client to apply for a birth certificate and he also refused to help with the upkeep of the child. Client was relieved to learn that she could actually apply for her child's birth certificate even in the absence of the father, since their marriage was registered<sup>18</sup>.

*I was so pleased to learn that I could claim for maintenance for our minor child. The counsellor also informed me that if I encountered any problems, I could enlist the services of Justice for Children Trust.*

Cynthia also decided to file for divorce and she was informed that she needed to engage a Private Lawyer since she was gainfully employed.

Some clients indicated that there was need for Musasa Project counsellors to visit some clients, especially those whose issues needed following up. This could be done to offer moral support as well as follow up counselling services to the clients, as indicated by one of the interviewees below: -

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<sup>18</sup> She had access to the husband's identity card

Norma was traumatized because she had not been feeling well of late. She decided to go for HIV tests and she tested positive. When she informed her husband, he did not seem surprised by the news and instead he told her that he was not interested. He told her that from that point on he did not want her to get into 'his' car because she would contaminate the interior. Client complied because she said that she thought he would change his mind and this treatment went on for years. The couple engaged in unprotected sex because client's husband refused to use protection. Client fell pregnant and gave birth to an HIV positive baby boy. The husband was now accusing her of not being careful. He wanted her and the baby out of the house. Client needed intervention and she came to Musasa Project who counselled her and then referred her to ZWLA for legal advice and services.

*Musasa Project can do more than just counsel in the comfort of their offices. Instead, they should make follow up visits to try and find out how else they can assist their clients as problems do not just end with one or two counselling sessions in their offices.*



#### **4.6 The Provision of Shelter**

On the assumption that the prescribed periods and available room that clients can stay at the safe house and half way house for survivors of domestic violence do not seem to meet some of the clientele expectations, the research revealed that clients received ongoing counselling services while in the shelter. They also got assistance with whatever legal services they needed from Musasa Project staff and/or our networking partners depending on the nature of services they required. However, counselling sessions could have been improved and other empowerment programmes offered to clients instead of those that were offered which were erratic and ad hoc sessions which were only conducted when the client requested them. This situation would have been ideal because clients needed a smooth and ongoing counsellor-initiated process.<sup>19</sup>

Engaging with perpetrators at a neutral venue as an organisation is very important and necessary, as it facilitates the inclusion of the perpetrators. Although Musasa Project involves the perpetrators to a certain extent, it does not have the mechanism to make the initiatives to engage with the man at neutral venues, as is the case with other similar organisations that offer counselling, shelter and legal services in other developed countries.

It was disturbing though to learn from some clients that had been admitted before and discharged that there were some cases where clients did not have enough time and financial resources to find and pay for alternative accommodation or to sustain themselves. Some clients needed a safer environment for themselves as well as for their children for longer than 2

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<sup>19</sup> At the time of this research, a Shelter matron had just been recruited. The housekeeper who is also a trained counsellor was helping the residents whenever they needed her counselling services, but this was rather taxing for her. I believe things have now changed for the better.

weeks and 3 months, respectively<sup>20</sup>. Some clients indicated during the interview that they had actually lied to the counsellor about the issue.<sup>21</sup>

One client who had said that she would go to her brother's place after leaving the safe house actually went back home to the perpetrator and the abuse started all over again. She did not come back to Musasa Project for further help at the time because she thought that she would be considered a failure in life. At the time of my interview with her, she had actually gathered enough courage and had at last left the man and this time she said that it was for good. She said:

*This time I left him for good because I realised that my future and that of my children was in my hands. I really wanted my children to grow up in an environment where there was a father, but the abuse was not doing them any good. I want to thank Musasa Project for empowering me although I took long to do the right thing for me.*

Some clients were accommodated at the safe house because they were referral cases from our networking collaborates like Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association (ZWLA), Justice for Children Trust, Police. They did not live in Harare, but needed legal services and the legal process was long. It meant that the cases took longer than 2 weeks during which they were supposed to stay in the temporary shelter. Because of economic hardships, the organisations did not have money for their clients' transport costs. This presented quite a challenge to Musasa Project, as they would not have funds to buy provisions for the upkeep of the clients<sup>22</sup>. In some cases, the partner organisations had to

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<sup>20</sup> Some clients although gainfully employed still failed to make ends meet because they would be paying high legal fees as legal organizations do not offer free services to people who are gainfully employed. Those that help those that are gainfully employed had a threshold of Z\$1 000 000 (one million dollars) US\$ 33 at the official rate or US\$0.25 on the parallel market then.

<sup>21</sup> Clients who are admitted are expected to assure their counsellor that they have alternative accommodation on discharge or if their partners are willing to come for couple counselling, then the counsellor gets assurance from the partner that he would not abuse client again.

<sup>22</sup> The Counseling, Shelter and Legal Services had been operating without funding for a number of years. The Stephen Lewis Foundation only started funding the unit around mid 2007

be approached to contribute towards expenses so that clients would not go hungry.

Other Musasa Project technical and funding partners insisted that their (Human Trafficking) clients should stay in the safe house for as long as they needed the facility, since the organisations would be paying for the clients' upkeep, while trying to find ways and means of reintegrating the clients back into their families and society.

#### **4.7 The Domestic Violence Act**

Zimbabwe ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). It is also a signatory to the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development and the subsequent Addendum on the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women<sup>23</sup>. On the 26<sup>th</sup> of February 2007 the President of The Republic of Zimbabwe signed into law the Domestic Violence Act [Chapter 5:16] and it was enforced on the 25<sup>th</sup> of October 2007.

This piece of legislation was crafted in such a way that it is not just protecting married women or cohabiting couples, but every member of the family who may be subjected to domestic violence. The different types of abuse that the Act alludes to, all fit into the four main categories of domestic violence, which are physical, psychological, sexual and financial. In other words, the government went out of its way to define domestic violence thus made sure that the woman is protected in the home. The Act, which was and still a much-celebrated piece of legislation was the brainchild of Musasa Project. The institution worked with other organisations in the NGO movement that were interested in promoting women's rights for the enactment of the law. It is

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<sup>23</sup> On September 8 1997, SADC states signed a Declaration on Gender and Development at a summit held in Blantyre, Malawi. This was followed with an Addendum on the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women and Children, signed on 14 September 1998.

intended to help protect women against domestic violence, which is a major contributor to HIV & AIDS.

#### **4.8 The Domestic Violence Council**

The Minister of Women's Affairs Gender and Community Development (WAGCD), Comrade Oppah Muchinguri, appointed an eight-member Anti-Domestic Violence Council which was set up to spearhead the implementation of the Domestic Violence Act. The Anti-Domestic Violence Council members include Ms Edna Bhala who is the Director of Musasa Project, Ms Isabella Nyarai Sergio from the Zimbabwe Republic Police, Mr Kelvin Hazangwi from Padare Men's Forum and Ms Sibusisiwe Zembe from the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare.

Other members of the council are Ms Edna Masiyiwa (Women's Action Group), Mr Herbert Mandeya (Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs), Bishop Trevor Manhanga (Pentecostal Assemblies of Zimbabwe) and Mr Bigboy Sylvester Mashayamombe (Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture). The significance of these appointments is that the above-mentioned members represent the different arms of government, the religious sector, as well as different sectors of the NGO movement who work to help reduce violence against women.

The Minister indicated that her ministry was also involved in training Police Officers and the judiciary in partnership with relevant stakeholders in handling domestic violence cases and establishing shelters or safe houses offering temporary shelter to victims of domestic violence. If all that the Minister promised comes to fruition, then the Act will go a long way in deterring perpetration of violence in the homes.

#### **4.9 Domestic Violence Act: Some Gaps**

The Domestic Violence Act is a commendable piece of legislation that will go a long way in protecting survivors of domestic violence. The government realised that it could not address the issue of domestic violence on its own and to that effect appointed the Anti Domestic Violence Council whose representation covers different sectors of government as well as the religious and NGO sector. However, the following issues need to be addressed as a matter of urgency by the government and its key stakeholders.

- The Anti Domestic Violence Council has not met after their initial meeting with the Minister of WAGCD in October 2007 and to this effect they are compromising the well being of women whom they are supposed to help promote.
- No regulations/guidelines have been put in place for the implementation of the Domestic Violence Act and this is proving to be a challenge for the judiciary who have to adjudicate on cases of domestic violence.
- There was no prior training of service providers, such as members of the police, the health care system or the judiciary, on how they would implement the law or deal with survivors of domestic violence.
- Although the State is obliged to provide safe houses for survivors of domestic violence, none are in place yet.
- The police are still charging perpetrators of domestic violence with common assault or assault grievous bodily harm because they do not have the necessary guidelines.
- The Victim Friendly Unit is not yet a specialized unit and this is cause for concern. For example, a police officer from the Traffic Section can be appointed a Victim Friendly Officer and, without any specialised training, still be expected to deliver quality work in their course of his or her new duties.

#### **4.10 The Role of Legal Aid**

The National Gender Policy (2004) Section 6.2.3, recommended for the following: -

- Prohibition of gender violence in general but more specifically on violence against women and children and
- Incorporation of the provisions for international human rights instruments i.e. (CEDAW) into domestic violence law.

While the above recommendations are good and well meant, they are still merely intentions recorded in writing and there is little evidence to prove that the Zimbabwe government is committed to ending domestic violence. Government, together with its stakeholders, should form a partnership and embark on a massive anti domestic violence campaign to compliment laws that are being enacted. This is because laws alone, if not complemented by changes in beliefs and attitudes of traditional and religious leaders, service providers as well as that of perpetrators and the community, are not sufficient to address, reduce and, subsequently, to end domestic violence.

On the assumption that legal services offered by Musasa Project are limited and often do not adequately address the needs of survivors of domestic violence within their abusive relationships, the research revealed the following points: -

Musasa Project has a vacant position of Legal Advocacy Officer, which needs a qualified lawyer, but there are no funds to pay for the officer. To this effect, the organisation only offers part legal services. There is only one (1) Paralegal Officer and there is too much work for the Paralegal Officer (who is also a counsellor) as compared to the number of clients who are assisted and referred to her by other 3 full time counsellors and 4 volunteer counsellors. Her capacity is also limited due to lack of financial support from the organisation for her capacity building so that she can be more dynamic in her work. Clients

end up going to other organisations for further legal assistance when they initially believed that they could get all the assistance they needed under one roof.

Joyce, a cross border trader, whose marriage was monogamous was beaten up and thrown out of her marital home by her lawful wedded husband because she questioned his relationship with another woman who moved into her house with her husband when she had gone to South Africa on her usual business trips. She came to Musasa Project to 'report' her wayward husband. She expected to receive counselling as well as legal advice and services under one roof. She had decided to file for adultery damages, and divorce among other things. She was not happy to be referred to Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association and Harare Legal Project Centre (HLPC) to get further legal information and services as she felt that it was time consuming and inconvenient.

*Why do you give your services piecemeal? I was expecting to get all the help under one roof. When I came to Musasa Project, I expected to help me with everything even to the extent of representing me in Court. Talking to me only empowers me with information but information alone is not enough because I need more from you people. I was told that I would need to make an appointment with the people from Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association and Harare Legal Project Centre and time is running out for me.*

The Paralegal Officer who helps clients with drafting of affidavits for peace orders, also offers limited information related to *inter alia*: -

- Divorce
- Maintenance
- Spoliation orders
- Adultery damages
- Lying-in expenses
- Assault damages
- Sharing of property
- Obtaining birth and death certificates
- Registering of deceased estates
- Inheritance

One client who was desperately in need of legal services was referred to one of the networking partners for legal assistance because her husband had thrown her out of their matrimonial home and was now living with another woman in the house. She had the following to say about the legal services offered by Musasa Project,

*I am happy with the counselling services, because one always has a listening ear and a shoulder to cry on, but I feel that it would have been better if Musasa Project had a qualified lawyer who could give me legal advice as well as represent me in the court in relation to all my presenting issues. My biggest challenge is that the institutions that I have been referred to have closed for the Christmas holidays and will only open in the second week of January 2008. Meanwhile I do not know what to do. Staying open during the festive season is fine but it is now more frustrating since right now I have nowhere else to take my legal problems. Partnership with networking organisations is good, but when you do not synchronise your calendars (with your partners), it throws us clients off balance and you do us a disservice.*

#### **4.11 Follow up Programmes**

Follow up programmes are good for any activity, because it is possible to use the programmes as monitoring and evaluation tools. It allows the recipients to give feedback to the service providers who can correct their mistakes on the spot or, alternatively, go back to the drawing board to review their operations. In other words, the follow up programmes could be used as an effective communication tool. On the assumption that there are no adequate follow up programmes in place to assist survivors of domestic violence, the following facts emerged -

Musasa Project has a Public Education and Training Unit (PETU), which disseminates information to the public at large and this particular activity, has been well received by traditional, religious as well as community leaders. Officers from the Public and Training Unit have been invited to different provinces to train the different leaders on domestic violence. In Manicaland Chief Makoni devotes the first 30 minutes of his court sittings to talking with his subjects about the negative effects of domestic violence on the abused, the abuser, the family, and how it hinders progress of the community as well as its



impact on the nation. The chief started this noble cause after attending a workshop on domestic violence that was conducted by Musasa Project.

The unit has also been working very closely with religious leaders, especially the apostolic sect. The Officers managed to penetrate this sect through working with some of the *Johane Masowe yeChishanu* Apostolic Church. The church now boasts of an association called Union for Development of Apostolic Churches in Zimbabwe Africa (UDACIZA). Through this association, the sect managed to come up with an HIV & AIDS policy document. The leadership has gone on a drive and are discouraging their members from being promiscuous as well as from having polygamous unions. For those that are already in polygamous marriages, they are calling for faithfulness between the partners. Musasa Project managed to conduct a series of workshops on domestic violence for the leadership as well as church members and these were well received.

The officers are still working to spread the word on domestic violence and they have targeted the *Johane Marange* apostolic sect, which is very difficult to penetrate because of their beliefs and practices, which sometimes breach the laws of the country. The above assertions have also been confirmed by Women Profiles Zimbabwe which state that,

*Indigenous African churches that combine elements of established Christian beliefs with some beliefs based on traditional African culture and religion generally accept and promote polygyny and the marriage of girls at young ages; they also generally approve of healing only through prayer and oppose science-based medicine including the vaccination of children.*

PETU has also established partnership with the Ministry of Education where it carried out a baseline survey on the magnitude of gender-based violence in primary and secondary schools. There are plans to form peer group clubs as well as train the teachers and other service providers in the schools to create a more gender sensitive environment of the schools. The officers also managed

to train deans of students, lecturers, ancillary staff and the students themselves on gender based violence in different tertiary institutions in the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education.

To this effect, there are peer group clubs for students in the institutions who have also been trained in basic counselling skills so that they can help those that need their support and services on campus. The efforts have seen female student being more assertive than they were before the training. Recommendations to the effect that some components of gender-based violence be incorporated in the schools curriculum were made and this is being reviewed by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Educations as well as the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education respectively.

The Gender Violence and HIV & AIDS Unit trains service providers on gender based violence with an emphasis on domestic violence. This unit also targets traditional and religious leaders as well as service provides like the police on the linkage between domestic violence and HIV & AIDS<sup>24</sup>. Even if the training is not in-depth, the intention is to reach leaders within the entire nation.

This programme aims to change beliefs and attitude of those people that lead and work with people. The aim is to equip them with skills as well as change their attitudes and beliefs on domestic violence, so that they can be more gender sensitive when they are working with survivors of domestic violence. The service providers can also help curb incidences of domestic violence through dialogue with perpetrators of domestic violence. The unit also works with policy makers. It lobbies and advocates for creation and amendment of laws that negatively impact women survivors of domestic violence. The recently introduced Domestic Violence Act is evidence of their work.

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<sup>24</sup> On programmes that involve the same target population, the units team up and this is cost effective

Although Musasa Project has the above-mentioned programmes in place, there is still need for follow up programmes for individual clients that would have received counselling. Although Musasa Project has public education programmes, they reach out to a limited number of communities due to financial constraints. The organisation takes every opportunity to use the electronic as well as the print media to talk and write about the negative effects of domestic violence. The officers respond to invitations from different institutions and communities and give talks as well as run workshops on domestic violence.

To this end, Musasa Project should fund raise so that they are able to offer the follow up services to their counselled clients. The research revealed that some clients still experienced abuse, even after being empowered with information but had nowhere else to go as they depended on the perpetrators for their upkeep. Some were even killed at the hands of their perpetrators. My research proved that counselling of clients alone without any follow up services and programmes was not sufficient.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This research endeavoured to discuss domestic violence and the impact of services offered by Musasa Project Harare Office. Domestic violence should not be condoned in any way, traditionally, socially or legally. Operational attempts to implement some laws like the Domestic Violence Act, which help to reduce violence on women in the homes, have not been given high priority by government.

The Domestic Violence Act is being treated as a social rather than a legal issue by the government. For other laws that have been enacted, the government made sure that guidelines for operation were available and users were trained prior to its implementation. Government needs to work closely with organisations (like Musasa Project and other human rights organisations) to help abused women through counselling, shelter and legal services, as well as education. The research revealed that the following challenges need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Endeavours to reach out to the public through public education should get maximum support from all the stakeholders in Zimbabwe and should not be politicised<sup>25</sup>, for any form of abuse, whether within or outside marriage, is wrong and should never be tolerated by individuals or by society at large. People who abuse their partners in the name of discipline, or for any other excuse, should be punished, as domestic violence is a human right abuse.

Musasa Project, as a service provider to the women of Zimbabwe, is doing much on the counselling services front, but could do much better. It is a well-established organisation but it is only located in three major cities, which makes it very difficult for people who live in places other than Harare,

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<sup>25</sup> In some cases Programme Officers have had to prove to the authorities at national, provincial district and ward levels before entering some constituencies that the programmes they want to run are not political.

Bulawayo and Gweru to access the counselling services of the organisation. There is countrywide engagement with stakeholders and some of them come from beyond the three cities. There seems little point in publishing their services to people who are so far removed from them. As one woman lamented:

*Maybe Musasa Project is meant to offer its services and facilities to people who live in big towns only!*

To address the anomaly, Musasa Project should consider having Satellite Offices in different towns and cities beyond Harare, Bulawayo and Gweru, so that they can reach out and help the wider population.

There is need to offer tailor-made educational workshops for men, as well as women, so that men are taken on board and are seen as partners as opposed to enemies. This move will be likely to reduce potential cases of domestic violence because, with the inception of the Domestic Violence Act, the law will definitely be in place deal with any offenders. There is also a need to have programmes for those convicted of domestic violence because, after serving their time for Domestic Violence offences, they will be likely to return to their partners and, without professional support, repeat their dysfunctional behaviour.

Referring abusive men in need of help to other organisations is good, but it would be ideal for Musasa to deal directly with them as well. As the name Musasa implies, people, i.e., both men and women, need the proverbial shade of the tree (of life) to rest, offload their problems and then move forward with their lives in a positive manner. This is only really possible if they both get assistance from the same source, Musasa Project. Programmes for abusive men can be given so that they become partners through engagement, rather than confrontation. This kind of approach can add value to what the organisation is already doing to help women and society. Sadly, some men

who have knocked on the doors of Musasa Project have been turned away when they were desperately in need of counselling services.

On the issue of public awareness programmes, Musasa Project should acquire portable voice-activated recorders so that there is a databank of case studies and testimonies that can empower communities on issues of domestic violence. Not everyone has access to radios and televisions. Some people are not literate so the oral testimonies will go a long way in helping survivors of domestic violence. There is also a need to step up contact and dialogue with people with disabilities by producing materials that are user-friendly for them.

Musasa Project employs counsellors who deal with complex issues that need to be handled with great care and this means that they have to be resilient all the time, right through trainings workshops, courses etc. To that effect, there is a need for the officers to attend further training on a regular basis in order to keep abreast of the current trends in their profession. The reason for this is that no single way of counselling is the best. Counsellors use the eclectic approach, in which a number of counselling techniques are employed in order to provide the best counselling services to their clients.

There is a need for the organisation to establish and build meaningful partnerships with other organizations, like ZWLA, Justice for Children Trust (JCT) etc, as well as service providers, like the police, the health system, social welfare and the judiciary. This is because Musasa Project does not have the capacity to deal holistically with all cases that are presented to them by their clients, especially those cases that involve legal issues. This move will help to expose, reduce and subsequently eradicate domestic violence in society. There is also the need to hire a lawyer who is conversant with all the legal implications of domestic violence and would be able to improve the services offered to the clients of Musasa Project.

A government that promotes the well-being of its citizens should not just enact laws on paper, such as the Domestic Violence Act, which was enacted in February 2007 and enforced in October of the same year. To date, however, no regulations for enforcing the Act have been passed, thus leaving enforcement agencies, such as the police and the judiciary, in the dark as to how the Act is to be effectively implemented.

Although the concept of a safe house is a noble idea, sometimes the period of stay may do more harm than good. In this respect, Musasa Project should establish where a client intends to go after she is discharged from the shelter, as it sometimes emerged that some clients went back home to their violent partners after leaving the safe house, thereby apparently defeating the purpose of the sheltered stay.

Since the government has not established any shelters for survivors of domestic violence, Government can work in partnership with Musasa Project as a starting point. Musasa can provide shelter for battered women, who may be referred to them for shelter while government provides food and other basic commodities for them.

The *Dura raMambo*<sup>26</sup> concept can be copied. This means that the community members can establish safety nets through their local leadership and build safe houses that can be used to accommodate abused women and children. The food from *Dura raMambo* can be used to feed those that are housed in the safe houses.

Although chiefs and other traditional, community and religious leaders as well as service providers have been trained on domestic violence, there is need to

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<sup>26</sup> The *dura ramambo* concept is where community members harvest grain like maize, sorghum or rapoko and it is stored in a granary at the chief's place. The grain is used to feed the disadvantaged in the community

improve training on the Domestic Violence Act so that the myth that the law was not put in place to 'fix' men is discussed, clarified and dispelled.

The chiefs should be able to interpret the Act correctly so that when matters of domestic violence come before them they can make decisions from an informed point of view, be sure of their jurisdiction and know with whom they and the parties are entitled to work in order to resolve such cases.

There is a need for promoting a continuity of programmes conducted by Musasa Project in Tertiary Institutions and beyond into work places and/or communities where 'peace clubs' can be established. This can go a long way in furthering the interests of the organisation. Musasa Project can also target new students during orientation week in as many universities as possible.

Violence against women especially domestic violence is a violation of their fundamental human rights, including their right to life, to health and to live lives free from physical, psychological, economic and sexual violence. There are various barriers that make it difficult for women to realise their rights and Musasa Project is aware of most of the barriers as discussed in the research. It is of paramount importance to empower women through counselling, providing shelter and legal services, as well as conducting public education programmes, so that the nation is educated and women can claim their rights wherever applicable because women rights are human rights!



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