



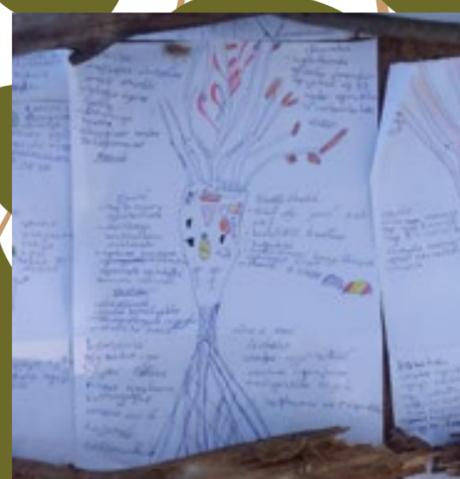
ANNUAL REPORT  
2023



TREE OF LIFE

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## Board Members (2023)

Dudzile Ndawana, Robinson Chikowero, Sikhathele Matambo,  
 Ross Parsons, Farai Samhungu, Temba Munsaka, Shobna Chakravarti,  
 Malini Patel, Paul Temba Nyathi

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Workshop photography: Tree of Life Staff

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## WHO WE ARE & WHAT WE DO

Established in 2002 and officially registered in 2010, the Tree of Life (ToL) Trust is a local Zimbabwean Non-Governmental Organization focusing on individual, family and community wellbeing and resilience building. We provide community-based, group-based mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) approaches that help people living with stress and trauma to reconnect with self, nature, family and community. ToL also conduct effective resilience-building Social Cohesion interventions that provide safe spaces for communities to openly discuss the problems that affect them, along with solutions that they can implement together using a clear Community Action Plan. With young people being the largest demographic group in Zimbabwe, ToL provide a variety of interventions geared towards supporting children and youth. We also collaborate with other Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Faith Based Organizations (FBO's) by providing capacity building and Training of Trainers in all of our services.

Tree of Life (ToL) works in 8 of the 10 provinces across Zimbabwe, through a network of over 200 seasoned Community-based Facilitators located in 22 Districts. Over the last twenty years we have directly reached over 210,000 beneficiaries with our various processes. We are currently a team of 35 core staff, 3 interns, over 150 volunteer Community-based Facilitators and a network of Community Cohesion Facilitators. Our core team (the 'small tree') operate from 2 substantive offices in Harare and Bulawayo and we have a small office in Masvingo whilst we are implementing a project in that district. With the combined support of close to 30 funders in the last fifteen years, we have implemented over 36 projects (mostly multi-year) totaling close to US\$17,000,000 (seventeen million US Dollars), and have collaborated with over 40 other Civil-Society Organizations in various ways. Tree of Life are also active members of several key networks such as the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT), the Pan-African Rehabilitation Initiative (PARI), the Peace Building Network of Zimbabwe (PBNZ), Human Rights NGO Forum, NANGO and more.

Vision	Mission	Goal	Values
A healed and resilient cohesive society	To inspire peaceful communities through processes of well-being and social cohesion	Tree of Life will be recognised as an organisation that inspires relevant & scalable collective trauma healing processes that are evidence based	Respect Responsibility Integrity Connection

## THEORY OF CHANGE

If trauma is dealt with through a group-based community-rooted process, including both victims and key people, then social-cohesion will increase, enabling reconciliation, peace and development to happen.



Katja Kuivanen

## OUR INTERVENTIONS & SERVICES

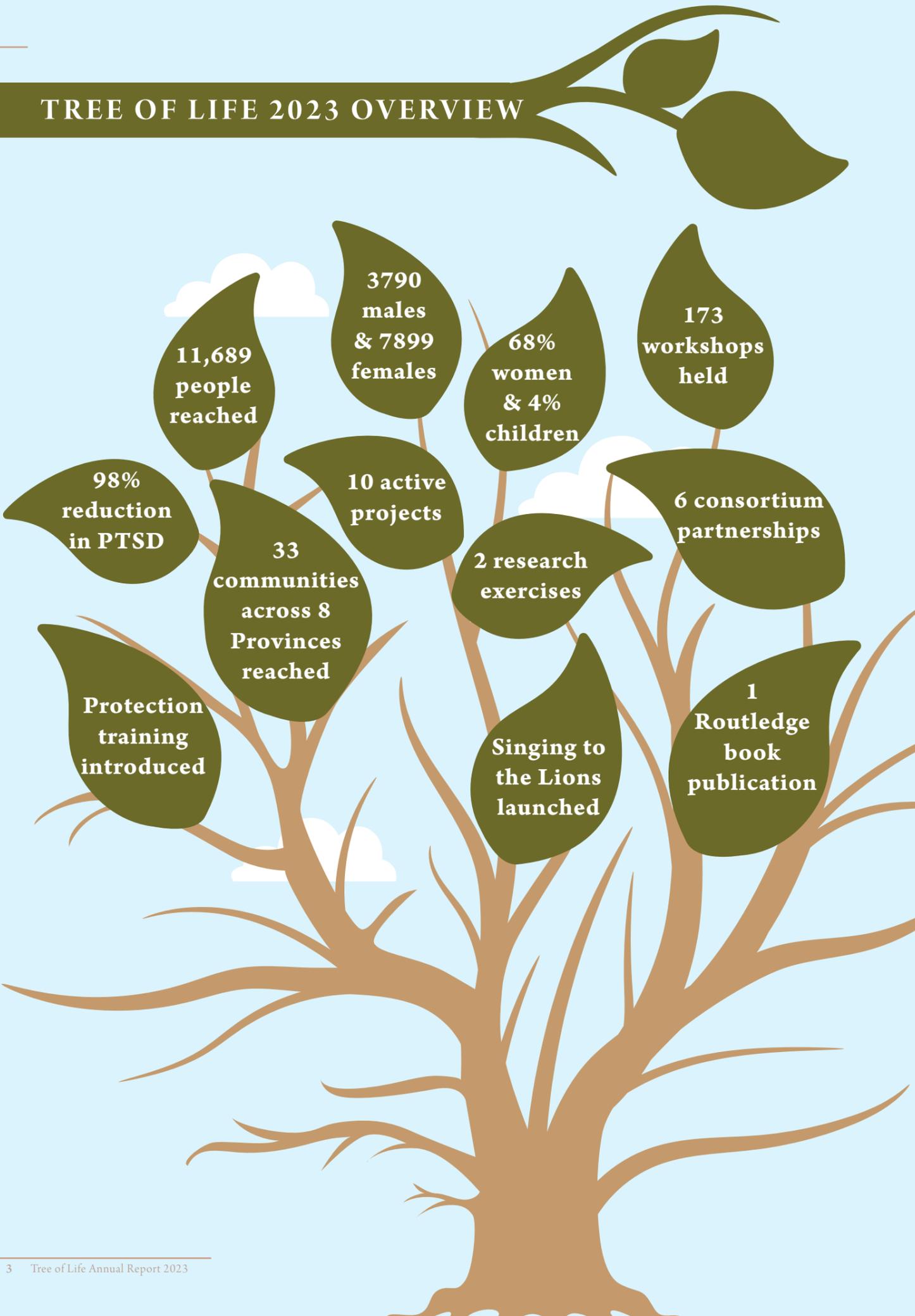
- Trauma Healing & Empowerment (TH&E) Workshops
- Psychosocial Awareness & Coping Skills (PACS) Workshops
- Psychological First Aid (PFA) Workshops
- Youth Empowerment Programming
- Working with Children and Protection
- Women Empowerment Interventions
- Capacity Building for Community Based Organizations
- Capacity Building for other Organizations
- Self-Care workshops for public and private enterprises



Katja Kuivanen



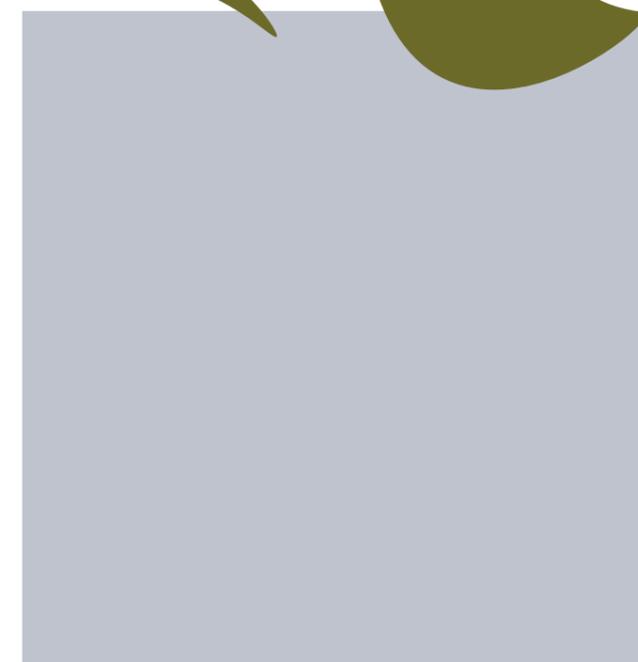
Katja Kuivanen



The year 2023 was filled with a lot of anxiety for the organization in many ways. However, two issues stood out and these were the August 23 and 24, 2023 elections, and the leadership transition due to the untimely departure of our newly appointed Director, Stella Motsi, due to family issues. The elections created a lot of apprehension and uncertainty within the Small Tree, the Big Tree, and the community at large due to the tense atmosphere that typically characterizes the Zimbabwean electoral context. While the leadership transition added to the anxiety, it did not affect the smooth running of the organization as we managed to bank on the flexibility of the former Director, Lynn Walker, who stepped in to competently oversee the transition.

As the year ended, we witnessed significant changes at both the management and board level. The Board finally appointed the former Finance and Administration Manager, Nokuthula Mahaka, as the substantive Director after a competitive recruitment process. Nokuthula has been with Tree of Life for over ten years, and the Board has confidence in her leadership to move the organization forward with the support of the senior management and the Board. We welcomed new members of the Board of Trustees to the Tree of Life family including the incoming Board Treasurer, Temba Munsaka, Shobna Chakravarti, Malini Patel, and Paul Themba Nyathi and we look forward to utilizing their invaluable skills and experience to take the organization to the next level. My term of office as Board Chairperson ends in December 2023, and Robinson Chikowero, an experienced development worker and the current vice chairperson, will take over as the new Board Chairperson in 2024.

In a nation marked by resilience in the face of adversity, we recognize the profound impact of trauma on individuals and communities. Our commitment to providing a safe space for healing, guidance, and empowerment remained unwavering during the year. Through our collective efforts and the generosity of our funding partners, we offered solace and support to those who have endured unimaginable hardships through our tried and tested healing and empowerment approaches.



At the operation level, we sadly saw the conclusion of one of our biggest projects during the year which also marked the end of a substantial percentage of our funding. Despite this development, we are happy that the team successfully implemented the project. The completion of the project did not deter our staff members who continued with our precious work despite the funding challenges. I am pleased to state that during the year, we concluded an external longitudinal study of this project, which confirmed that the Tree of Life approach has a long-term positive impact on the mental health, well-being, resilience, and social engagement of survivors of traumatic experiences.

To our esteemed funding partners, I extend a heartfelt thank you for your unwavering support. Your generosity was instrumental in enabling us to expand our reach, enhance our services, and touch the lives of numerous individuals in need. Your development-oriented partnership exemplifies the spirit of collaboration and solidarity that lies at the heart of our organization.

As we reflect on our journey, we cannot ignore the significance of the elections that took place in 2023. The democratic process is a cornerstone of our nation's progress, and we commend the resilience and determination of all those who participated

in shaping Zimbabwe's future through their votes. Yet, as we celebrate the democratic process, we also recognize the challenges that persist. The aftermath of elections can potentially culminate in heightened emotions, societal tensions, and individual traumas. It is during these times of transition that our services are needed most – to provide support, understanding, and healing to all members of our society.

Together, we have the power to spark transformation, instill hope, and build a brighter future for all Zimbabweans. As Tree of Life, we seize every opportunity to amplify our impact, to innovate in

our approach, and to foster a culture of healing and resilience.

In conclusion, on behalf of the Board of Trustees, I extend my deepest appreciation to every member of the Tree of Life family for your unwavering dedication and commitment to our cause. It is through our collective efforts, bolstered by the support of our funding partners that we will continue to make a meaningful difference in the lives of the communities we serve.

- *Dudu Ndawana*

## DIRECTOR'S FOREWORD



complemented by the support and partnership of numerous other organisations and funders. Our heartfelt gratitude goes out to the many special people who are contributing to healing and cohesion in their communities and who give of their time voluntarily to support survivors of trauma.

A number of key changes to the Tree of Life leadership took place over the year. Jessie Pwiti, the Board Chairperson, completed her term of service at the end of 2022 and Duduzile Ndawana assumed the role at the start of the year. Shortly after this Stella Motsi, who had joined us recently as director, had to leave very suddenly for personal reasons. Lynn Walker, the previous Director returned to the role on a temporary basis whilst the Board of Trustees recruited a substantive Director to take the organisation forward. As a result of this process Nokuthula Mahaka, previously the Finance and Administration Manager, was promoted to the role of Director and she commenced her new role in November of 2023. Although the organisation has had to adapt to a greater than usual amount of change during the year, we were able to complete a strategic planning process initiated in 2022 and the new 2024 – 2028 Strategy was adopted by the Board of Trustees in December. This strategy will guide our programmatic and organisational development over the next five years building on the foundation of innovative approaches refined over the previous strategic period.

Looking back on 2023 for Tree of Life, the word “resilience” features prominently. The year brought many unexpected transitions and changes which needed adaption both programmatically and organisationally. Navigating these whilst continuing to deliver quality programmes drew greatly on Tree of Life’s adaptability and strength, enabling us to meet and even exceed our targets and to adapt to the evolving context. This achievement is testament to the massive commitment shown both by the Tree of Life core team, the “Small Tree”, and the “Big Tree” of over 200 Community-based Facilitators,

The organisation successfully completed several projects during the year and the learning from these and on-going work is enabling Tree of Life to demonstrate the relevance and impact of our community-based approach. One of the long term programmes we completed in 2023 was the focus of an externally evaluated longitudinal study in the final part of 2023, which confirmed what our internal monitoring data over the past 12 years has shown, that the Tree of Life approach has a long-term positive impact on individual mental health, well-being, resilience and social engagement for survivors of traumatic experiences. The Tree of Life group-based, community-rooted process was also externally validated in research supported through CVT and features in a chapter of the book published by Routledge in 2023 (DOI: 10.4324/9781003192978-4). Research into the Tree of Life community psycho-education by Washington State University (WSU) is also in the final stages and will give further evidence of the impact of ToL’s interventions on community cohesion. As awareness of the importance of mental health grows, both nationally and international, this body of externally validated evidence of the effectiveness of the ToL approach, gives us the confident that we can contribute to national and international policy and approaches to mental health.

The year saw many organisations facing resource challenges, and Tree of Life was not exempt from this. The completion of several large projects meant that our geographical footprint changed during the year. The approach of building and strengthening community capacity and equipping Community-based Facilitators with the skills to continue supporting their communities, means that sustainable relationships remain wherever we work and the core team are able to offer guidance and support, when needed, remotely. We are grateful to all the funders who supported our work in 2023 and hope that the positive and impactful relationships we have developed will continue into future years and we work to inspire peaceful cohesive communities and collective well-being.

- *Lynn Walker (Interim Director)*



# USAID COMMUNITY HEALING & COHESION (CHC) PROJECT

At the end of July 2023, the USAID funded Community Healing and Cohesion (CHC) project sadly came to an end after five and a half years of implementation. The \$6,518,185.00 CHC partnership had built on the successful gains of ToL's first direct Cooperative Agreement from 2012-2018 and fed into USAID's Country Development Cooperative Strategy of "Promoting Peace, Social Cohesion and Human Rights".

Running from 1 April 2018 through to 31 July 2023, CHC focused on improving community cohesion, reducing poor mental health outcomes in trauma victims, increasing structured community engagement and improving Tree of Life's overall organizational development capacity. Despite having to operate amidst a tumultuous operating environment, including continued inflation and economic decline, two elections and the global Covid-19 pandemic, we were able to not only meet our targets overall, but to exceed them. Of a targeted 17,000 people to reach over five years, we were able to directly reach a total of 38,967 people, being a 229% achievement rate. This success was made possible by the reliable support of each and every stakeholder in the CHC project, from the ToL staff to the community-based volunteers and especially our funders at USAID, who went above and beyond to help us achieve our goals.

Delving deeper into the results of each outcome area, the successes, challenges and lessons learned have all contributed to ToL's exponential growth in more ways than one. An important reflection is the critical role that society at large plays in healing and improving the lives of wounded individuals, and moreover, the important role that healed and empowered individuals play in establishing cohesive communities. True to its name, the Community Cohesion and Healing project saw multitudes of people not only progressing well at an individual level (evidenced by reduced PTSD), we saw even bigger transformations in the broader communities where our diverse psychosocial support interventions were evidently improving social cohesion and community resilience at large. The impact the CHC project led to a landmark breakthrough, where for the first time in our existence, Tree of Life became a key consortium partner in a USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) project, namely the World Food Programme (WFP) Zambuko Resilience Building Livelihoods Initiative. Even now, the voices from the Zambuko beneficiaries continue to echo the slogan "Social Cohesion is here" and the communities are forever grateful to Tree of Life for helping them realize that they themselves are responsible for the betterment of their lives, and not the Donors. During the project ToL introduced some new and important interventions including Psychological First Aid (PFA), Trauma Informed-Care training, Self-Care and Burnout Management modules, Bereavement and Loss Training, Suicide management training, Conflict Management and more.

288 reached in 2023  
115 men & 173 women

*"87% of respondents stated they have used skills they learned in a ToL intervention in the past 30 days either "somewhat" or "a lot," with 61.3% falling into the latter category" – Cloudburst Group Long-Term Impact Study*

*"ToL interventions result in sustained improvements on measures related to social cohesion and resilience. "Key finding in The Cloudburst Group Impact Study*

*"Ongoing and worsening political violence and economic shocks take a toll on long-term mental health outcomes. However, respondents describe ToL as imparting vital skills that support them in the face of sustained difficulties" – Key finding in The Cloudburst Group Impact study*

## Community Cohesion Results

By 2023 – the CHC project had reached 31,557 people with psychosocial support services as follows:

- 58 Psychosocial Awareness and Coping Skills (PACS) workshops were held for 4,314 people (1,402 men and 2,912 women)
- 24 Psychological First Aid (PFA) workshops were held for 1,297 people (362 men and 935 women)
- 25,946 people (12,218 men and 13,728 women) across 15 communities were provided with Covid-19 Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services (MHPSS) at the height of the pandemic

## Structured Community Engagement Results

As a sustainability strategy, this objective area sought to increase the skills and capacity of community-based facilitators, to become Training of Trainers in our psychosocial support interventions, thus enabling them to strengthen and support community engagement in their respective communities:

- Of a targeted 150 facilitators to train in PACS, 150 were trained (83 males & 67 females)
- Of a targeted 50 facilitators to train in PFA, 90 were trained (53 males & 37 females)
- Of a targeted 2 Civil Society Organizations to train, 5 were achieved
- Of a targeted 10 Training sessions for the Big Tree over five years, more than 20 were held

## Trauma Healing & Empowerment Mental Health results

To monitor impact, ToL uses the World Health Organization (WHO) Self Reporting Questionnaire (SRQ-20) which measures 20 symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Anxiety and Depression. Participants who score 7 or more are deemed to be "Clinical Cases" and those scoring 10 and above are "Severe cases" in need of specialist psychological services. The table below reflects the results of participants throughout the CHC project who were screened with the SRQ-20. After the workshops 84% of 3942 clients were followed up (3318), and the impressive before and after results are reflected below:

### SRQ-20 impact data from TH&E workshops over 5 years, n = 3318

SRQ-20 analysis	Before	%	After	%	Difference at follow-up
Most common SRQ-20 score	10		3		The most common SRQ drop was by 7 symptoms
Average SRQ-20 Score	11		3		The average score dropped by 8 symptoms
Clinical cases (7 and above)	3225	97	58	2	98% of previously clinical cases were no longer severe
Severe cases (10 and above)	2295	69	11	0.3	99% of previously severe cases were no longer severe
Suicidal ideations	170	5	11	0.3	Suicidal ideation cases dropped from 170 to 11 people

## Organisational Development improved

During the CHC project the overall organizational development capacity of Tree of Life as staff, as an entity and as a network grew in leaps and bounds. In particular, the technical organizational capacity partnership with CVT under the Partners in Trauma Healing (PATH) project, was instrumental in helping us streamline our skills in the Programming, M&E and Clinical Supervision departments. Scores of capacity development trainings were undertaken by staff as individuals and as teams. Critical to our development as an organization has been the important networks and partnerships that ToL has joined during the CHC project wherein we have partnered closely with over 30 other Civil Society Organizations both locally, regionally

and internationally. In 2023, to ascertain the success of the CHC project, USAID commissioned the Cloudburst Group to conduct a longitudinal meta-evaluation, details of which are found in the Evidence-base initiatives section. Tree of Life are beyond grateful to USAID of over 11 years of what has been a thoroughly fruitful and successful partnership, which we look dream of continuing in the future.

## WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME ZAMBUKO LIVELIHOODS PROJECT – PHASE 2

960  
reached  
in 2023

245 males &  
715 females

The USAID funded Zambuko Livelihoods Initiative is a project spearheaded by the World Food Programme (WFP) in a consortium of organizations namely CIMMYT, SNV- Netherlands Development Organization (SNV), Mwenezi Development Training Centre (MDTC) and Tree of Life (ToL). Zambuko Phase 2 is building upon the achievements of the successful Zambuko Phase 1 which was implemented from 2020 – 2022. Phase 2 began in October 2023 and will run until the end of September 2024. The project is being implemented in 3 districts of Masvingo Province, being Chiredzi, Masvingo, and Mwenezi.

ToL's role in Zambuko seeks to strengthen community cohesion and enhance the capacity of communities to address and resolve conflicts that hinder resilience. This is done through the roll out of our Psychosocial Awareness and Coping Skills (PACS) workshop which helps communities to understand how stress and trauma can affect their ability to contribute to their own lives, their families and communities, until such stressors are dealt with. The workshop then goes on to support groups to identify the barriers and enablers of social cohesion, how to design their own broad community vision and then guides groups in tailor making a joint Community Action Plan (CAP). We then train locally based volunteers as Community Cohesion Facilitators (CCF's) for purposes of both conflict management and supporting communities to stay on track with the actions they outlined on their collective Community Action Plans.

New in Phase 2 of the Zambuko project is an intentional Protection component in which ToL's role is to raise awareness and educate project participants on protection issues. Protection awareness sessions on various forms of Child abuse, Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA), Gender Based Violence (GBV), and other forms of abuse are conducted at each and every Zambuko activity. By raising awareness participants and their communities are equipped with information, knowledge and skills they need to



safeguard themselves. Raising awareness also empowers them to be able to identify cases of abuse and report them to appropriate service providers through the use of local structures and proper referral pathways until the case(s) reach the national case management. ToL works with other line ministries such as the Department of Social Development (DSD), Ministry of Women's Affairs and other organizations such as Childline, Plan International and Musasa Project who are experts in child protection and GBV respectively. As the Zambuko 2 project focuses mostly on representatives of households who are contributing to a specific resilience-building activity in the community, some may face barriers in accessing resources and protection mainstreaming works to eliminate such obstacles. It empowers individuals to claim their rights and utilize available resources effectively, thereby improving their overall well-being.

In 2023, ToL reached out to a total of 960 participants (715 Females and 245 Males), through education and awareness sessions on various protection issues. The protection component in the project helps participants and communities to reduce their vulnerability to exploitation and abuse and it empowers them to make informed choices about their security. Protection creates an environment where people feel secure and valued and in turn, strengthens the bonds that hold a society together – hence promoting social cohesion.

“ Our dream is to expand mainstreaming of protection to intentionally raising awareness across all projects. ”



“ Government and NGOs have us at heart because they are giving us sustainable projects and teaching that we should not only rely on the donors. ToL has become our Moses. ToL taught us how to be united. We learnt that it is of great importance to have a common goal with the leadership, resolve conflicts as well as manage stress and trauma. ”  
– Zambuko PACS participant



Katja Kuivanen



Katja Kuivanen



Katja Kuivanen



# BREAD FOR THE WORLD YOUTH COMMUNITY-LED PROJECTS (YCP)

2304  
reached  
in 2023

1077 men  
& 1227  
women

The Youth Community-Led Projects (YCP) is an empowerment initiative specifically meant to build the capacity of young people to design and manage community projects which seek to promote peace and community cohesion. The project is being funded by Brot fur die Welt and in 2023 the last six months of YCP1 ran from January-June, with a second three year contract (YCP2) successfully being secured with effect from 1 July 2023. The overall goal of YCP is to help young people contribute towards peace and community cohesion through implementing community projects. This is being done by strengthening the capacity of young people in conflict affected communities to manage small grants and implement peace projects in their communities. In addition, the project seeks to enhance the skills and knowledge of young people to identify and establish livelihoods options for youth at large. The project is being implemented in 6 communities across Zimbabwe, being Epworth, Chitungwiza, Mabvuku, Chinhoyi, Nketa and Entumbane.

An End of Project external evaluation was held with impressive findings on the transformational empowerment that was realized by the youth from an individual, group and community perspective:

- The Peer review workshops provided a platform for peer-to-peer cross pollination of ideas amongst youth. This cross learning exchange platform enabled all the 18 youth groups to learn from each other by drawing lessons from each other's experiences.
- Youth prioritized social justice advocacy and awareness campaigns prior to embarking on livelihoods projects because they felt that youth need to be more empowered around social issues before they attempt to work together on livelihoods initiatives. As a result many youth have reduced or stopped substance abuse and promiscuity and are picking up their lives.
- The youth established good working relationships with multiple stakeholders through collaborations, being a good indicator for sustainability beyond the project's lifespan.
- A total of 18 youth groups managed to complete the implementation of their third stage community led activities across the 6 communities. 18 youth were also awarded livelihood projects which ranged from detergent making, poultry rearing and dress making.
- A key success enabler for the project was the integration of hardware and software components. Trainings which improved knowledge about how to do things was complimented by tangible support in the form of livelihoods grants
- There is strong appetite for community driven support aimed at knowledge building as well as entrepreneurial growth: - The evaluation documented in the context of Zimbabwe's highly informalised economy, there is strong willingness especially among young people to access information as well as technical support to be able to create their own employment.

YCP2 kicked off well in July and activities done include planning meetings, the grant launch of the YCP 2 project, Environmental Assessment, Project Inception meetings, Baseline survey, Group identification, Group Dynamics trainings and more. So far all the newly trained youth groups have managed to develop group constitutions that will guide their work and team culture. YCP 2 is being implemented differently from the initial YCP 1 project drawing lessons from the YCP 1 end of project

evaluation by engaging more organizations working with young people for cross fertilization of ideas, learning and strengthening collaborations. Moving forward we encourage more funders and Civil Society peers to collaborate with us one what we believe is a game-changing model for youth programming in Zimbabwe!



# BREAD FOR THE WORLD YOUTH ENGAGEMENT FOR PEACE PROJECT – YEPP3

Bread for the World Youth Engagement for Peace Project 3 (YEPP 3), is a follow on to the YEPP 2 project which ran from 2019 to April 2021. The previous project supported the young people in Chitungwiza, Epworth, Chinhoyi, Entumbane, Mabvuku and Nketa. This project expected to train Youth Facilitators in each community to further support fellow young people in the areas of peace and mental wellbeing through the identification, organizing and facilitation of Youth-Friendly PACS workshops.

YEPP 3, a follow-on project designed to improved social cohesion and livelihood options for young people, enabling them to become social agents for peace in their communities, started in October 2021. The project came with additional components as informed by the lessons learned from YEPP2. On top of the PACS that responded only to psychological issues of the young people, YEPP 3 was designed to capacitate youth with leadership skills, community visioning and mapping of community action plans (CAPs), community mobilization through the Art of Hosting and strengthened networking skills. The Youth Facilitators are expected to support their peers as well as their community at large to deal with their mental wellbeing issues, envision collectively and come up with action plans to better their livelihoods opportunities as well as leveraging on improved collaborations. They are expected to also better their lives as they support others.

The project communities include Chitungwiza, Mabvuku, Epworth (New teams), Nkayi and Goromonzi as the 2 new communities (rural). Activities under YEPP3 include:

- Strategic PACS and Community PACS workshops
- Youth Facilitator Training in PACS
- Youth-Led Community PACS workshops
- Group Dynamics Training for Facilitators
- Entrepreneurship/Livelihoods Training
- Art of Hosting Training (by Kufunda Village)
- Oasis Games Training (by Kufunda Village)



1517  
reached  
in 2023

673 males  
& 844  
females

## Some notable successes of YEPP include:

- Sustained teams - Groups that were formed in the first year of the project (2017) are still going strong in year 3. Youth teams are growing in-terms of team work and working on their visions and support each other as mentors
- Increased confidence, leadership and networking skills have been exhibited by the YEPP3 youth. Local leaders and stakeholders increasingly entrust youth from these groups to lead some community activities. In many communities the government and local leaders support the youths as a step towards their sustainability strategy, ensuring that work which was started by ToL is set to continue in the long-run.
- The Oasis games helped bridge the gap between the young and the elderly. The community people, both youth and adults admitted that tensions between the generations were growing and were threatening both the family and community fabric.
- YFs are reaching out to their peers raising awareness on drugs and substance abuse, effects of early marriages, encouraging peers to think broadly about their “better” future- challenging them to start small activities that can keep them occupied and earning something at the end of the day.



YEPP 3 has realized many successes and the model is becoming a best practice as it veers away from the traditional youth programmes that dish out start-up funds for livelihoods projects (what we call hardware) and rather equips the youth with mindset and behavioral change (software) skills to be empowered as individuals and communities who are ready to begin and own what they do, in their own right and using their own resources.

Through YEPP3 capacity building, the youth team in Nkayi has attracted the attention of various stakeholders who are keen, and in some instances, who have since started collaborating or working with selected individuals from the groups (AMALIMA LOKO, Ministry Youth) who have already started to work closely with the youth team in Nkayi.

The Art of Hosting (AoH) skills saw youth teams bringing other youth, community elders and leaders together to start processes of community visioning and the results are seen in the community dam which was resuscitated in Mukhalandoda in Nkayi. Currently their animals are still drinking from a dam which was previously long forgotten as the community were waiting for donor aid to mend it.

The Headman for Goromonzi Chishawasha area applauded the youth program which he felt was able to help the latter to realise their self-worth and had the following to say; “I have no doubt that the team of youth has transformed and grown in life skills, leadership and I often work closely with some of them as they have exhibited progressive mindsets. We have many youth misfits in this community which I am very hopeful that if the youth team continues to reach out to them, the community youths can improve and lives can be saved” He pointed to the way the team was modelling through their changed behavior, which their peers are now also emulating.

The Chief of Nkayi attended an Oasis game organised by Youth Facilitators and after seeing the positive results said, “We are a very remote community and we have literally lost most of our youth. There is war in this community, parents fear their children as the later have become so wild that the parents are no-longer able to rein them in any more. I took over the Chieftain from my father but I must admit that I have never seen such an activity, where the young people are able to bring together more than 40 adults and work together for 3 days. I already feel a progressive community if as a community we embrace this initiative and support it going forward”.

## CHILDLINE SCREEN ONLINE PROJECT

Running from October 2022 to December 2023, Tree of Life joined forces with other NGOs, Childline Zimbabwe, Harare Institute of Technology and Deaf Zimbabwe Trust in the quest of raising awareness on Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (OCSEA) in the Screen Online Project.

The Screen Online Project was designed to positively influence children, families, communities to adopt strategies increasing the prevention of child abuse in social spaces. Tree of Life's interventions were expected to reach out to 800 parents and caregivers through PAPFA trainings, 360 District Child Protection Committees through strategic PAPFA trainings and 40 Helpline Agents. During the project life span, TOL hosted Psycho Social Awareness and Psychological First Aid trainings for please add number Parents and families in the 4 districts of implementation, 358 DCPCS, 36 Helpline Agents and a refresher for the Helpline Agents. The project being implemented in 4 districts (Harare, Bulawayo, Masvingo and Mutare), many lessons were learnt during the implementation phase including the inclusion of minority groups in our communities, parents and children with disabilities as the trainings brought to light that every child is at risk to being sexually abused online as well as the involvement of local radio stations that was going to enable us to reach out to more people than anticipated as OCSEA is now a national disaster.

Integration of the Youths and children in the trainings proved also to be a very good lesson as they came with some positive contributions which made it easy for the parents to understand how they are behaving the way they are behaving which then exposes them to OCSEA. Various testimonies were also shared by parents and children regarding to sexual violence online as one of the caregiver who attended our trainings shared how his sign was completely abused by a stranger who he met online to the point that the 16 year old boy was now married to the lady who was residing in South Africa. She stated how they only realized later that something was wrong with their son as they had been ignoring various signs that showed them that the child was vulnerable and now exposed to OCSEA.

1037  
people  
reached

207 males  
& 830  
females



## WELTHUNGERHILFE (WHH) CHIMANIMANI PROJECT

2246  
people  
reached

716 males  
& 1530  
females

The USAID/BHA funded Welthungerhilfe (WHH) Emergency Recovery Project was implemented in Chimanimani to address mental health, community conflicts, and cohesion issues between the host community and relocated Cyclone Idai Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). As a consortium partner, Tree of Life rolled out social cohesion interventions in the form of Strategic PACS for Leaders, PACS with community people as well as PACS with children. 40 Social cohesion and conflict management cadres were also trained by the project to facilitate social cohesion activities within the community and identify/manage community conflicts. Cyclone Idai induced mental health challenges were addressed deeply through ToL Trauma Healing and Empowerment processes targeting both adults and resilience building for young persons.

### Some Successes of the project:

- Tree of Life workshops were the first platform where host members and IDPs met and interacted for a common purpose. The differences and misperceptions had created a divide between the 2 groups.
- Due to increased social cohesion, host communities and IDPs came up with collective visions and action plans on enhancing unity, love and cohesion amongst themselves, fighting child abuse and child marriages, addressing drugs and substance abuse, reclamation of dilapidated roads, improving livestock management through construction of communal paddocks and grazing areas, promoting household hygiene through constructing toilets and digging refuse pits. Most of the proposed actions on the CAPs were started by the community and tracked by the trained Community Cohesion Facilitators.
- An unintended outcome saw Women starting mikando (ISALs) to boost their household income for improved coping with food insecurity challenges as well as school fees for their children. The mikando (ISALs groups) are inclusive of IDPs and hosts members which is due to the enhanced collaboration and cohesion amongst them.
- Restoration of and or improvement of mental health amongst traumatized, stressed and depressed community members due to ToL processes.
- Improved awareness of conflict and how to manage it for sustainable community integration, social cohesion and collective community development.
- Tree of Life had a major positive impact on the Runyararo community as it accorded each member an equal chance to participate regardless of gender, age, sex, social status, education level, political affiliation. The collective involvement of all, created and enhanced a sense of belonging amongst community members.

56 community leaders were taken through a Strategic PACS workshop. A total of 1018 host members and IDPs were reached through social cohesion interventions against a targeted total of 1000 community people. A total of 215 children and young persons were also reached against a target of 200 people, using the Singing to the Lions tool.

*"After the death of an elderly host member in Runyararo, IDPs took the initiative to assist the widowed Host members. Transport arrangements were made to take the body to hospital, food items and other required items to support the funeral were mobilized by the IDPs. This invaluable gesture from the IDPs towards their fellow Host members spelt out the community was progressive towards a cohesive community."*

*"If Tree of Life had not come to Runyararo, I would have lost my life as I was on the verge of taking my own life."*

*"The way my internal wounds were healed, I think Tree of Life is a church"*

## CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES (CRS) PROJECT

The goal of our project with CRS was to achieve socially cohesive communities with improved civic trust in Lupane and Tsholotsho Districts and pursue shared solutions to address historical grievances and current inequalities. The project started in January 2021 and ended in June 2023 after being implemented for 30 months. The project was successfully able to support communities in Lupane and Tsholotsho Districts who experience sustained constructive dialogue transforming social injustices as noted by one participant from Lupane District.

*“Project interventions were crucial in motivating participants and other stakeholders to sit down and discuss matters of concern and reach amicable agreement in meeting the needs of all concerned without resorting to violent conduct. Project activities also built trust among local communities.”*

The project also aimed at supporting citizens in Lupane and Tsholotsho Districts have increased trust in state institutions to facilitate the addressing of socio-economic and political inequalities. One participant in Tsholotsho affirmed that this was achieved when asked by an external evaluator,

*“The project has helped me to re-look and re-consider my attitude and behavior towards authority and other people. Although the disturbances of the mid-1980s occurred when I was still very young, my parents and other relatives often spoke about this dark chapter and it affected me negatively. I am now able to ask questions and understand my history more fully“* KII June 2023.

Overall, the project which delayed start in 2021 due to Covid 19 movement restrictions reached 179 (76 m, 103f) through four (4) Trauma Healing & Empowerment interventions, 143 (58m, 85f) people were followed up to assess their recovery processes after the initial trauma healing interventions, four (4) PACS reached 201 (84m, 117f) people. To ensure that there is continued psychosocial support for the trauma affected people in the identified Districts. ToL capacitated 50 Animators as Community Facilitators who are based in the communities to provide therapeutic support.

Youth in both districts noted that they were less intimidated by authority figures than their much older parents. They said they were free to raise issues of concern with local authorities or local politicians, although in the past this was not common. Such testimonies are proxy indicators that attest to the changes in attitude and behavior that can be – in part – be attributed to the project.

380  
people  
reached

160 males  
& 220  
females

### The major lessons learnt in this project are:

- Efforts that are more creative are required to capture the interest and enthusiasm of the youth. A major lesson is that there was need to introduce more gendered interventions, with youth having their own dedicated interventions.
- Comprehensive situational analysis is key to inform the design of integrated trauma healing and community cohesion programmes.
- A major lesson is that a project of this nature (psychosocial and trauma healing) required more time and resources.

*“In Gomoza, Lupane, the community had five recent cases of suicide by hanging which has been traumatic to the community, “ukuzibophela kwabantu kutshengisa ukuthi abantu abakakutholi ukukhuluma okungabathoba ingaphakathi zabo” (Suicides show that people have not yet reached that “speaking-out” stage that can soothe what it hurting them deep inside).*

## BAMBELELA PROJECT

Tree of Life (ToL) in a collaboration with Caritas and Catholic Relief Services (CRS), as a Technical Partner, responded and supported community people who are struggling as a result of the aftermath of COVID 19 in the two districts of Matobo and Tsholotsho. ToL provided Psychosocial Support and Trauma Healing interventions to the project participants who included adults, youth and children in the 10 wards that were targeted by the project. In Tsholotsho district, the wards of operation are 10, 11, 12 and 15, and in Matobo district, the project is being implemented in wards 6, 10, 13, 17, 19 and 22. The project is being supported by the Government of Zimbabwe and is funded by USAID and the overall target of the project is 2000 households, 1500 youths and 1500 children cumulatively from both districts. ToL reached 2000 adults with Psychosocial Awareness and Psychological First Aid (PAPFA), 800 Youths with Psychosocial Awareness and Coping Skills (PACS). 700 youth were reached by the trained Peer Facilitators through the cascading activities. 160 Children were reached through a Singing to the Lions intervention (Trauma Healing) and the rest of the 1500 children were reached by the Peer Facilitators with the support from the trained Child Care Worker (CCWs).

3058  
people  
reached

683 males  
& 2375  
females

### Local Capacity Strengthening

- The Singing to the Lions and PACS Social Cohesion tools use a group process where participants together with leaders get a chance to reflect, introspect and design sustainable ways they could come up with to strengthen their local capacity to collaborate, initiate, involve all and take ownership of the livelihoods and development initiatives.
- The process helps local people to come up with a shared vision and also the small steps (Community Action Plans) that they could start to work on as a people.
- Training of Peer Facilitators to spearhead youth inclusion on a peer-to-peer interaction including identification of livelihoods initiatives that they could do on their own
- 48 CCWs were capacitated to support fellow community people and Children and youth.
- Government and local leaders’ inclusion for to ensure buy-in and continued support.

### Gender Equality (75%+ women reached)

The project had more women participants than men due to the various forms of abuse they face. Protection issues awareness raising on Gross Domestic Violence, Child protection issues, women’s rights and the encouragement for women to play a more useful role in community and family development initiatives were held.



## Youth Engagement

- The project intentionally targeted 1500 Youths in the 2 districts of Matobo and Tsholotsho and ToL achieved the number as planned. 1707 youths were reached, youth workshops were attended by more girls 56%.
- Youths were helped to deal with mental and psychological overloads, identify their stressors and at the end identify positive coping mechanisms.
- Young people were able to come up with their broad shared vision and identified small steps they could start working on to better their livelihoods chances.

## Engaging other marginalized people

ToL interventions are open to all population groups including the disadvantaged. It must however be noted that ToL `s point of departure is the register of pre-identified participants. This limits in terms of inclusion of the disadvantaged if they were not already part of the registered Bamblela participants.



## STORIES OF IMPACT

*A Silk group member shared that the PAPFA workshops that they attended helped them to realise and see the importance of working together, conscious communication and the skills to relate and resolve misunderstandings. They also spoke about how the workshops helped to come up with their vision and the action plans that they are implementing together in collaboration. It was difficult to come together for a common cause before.*

*A Silk group in Matobo shared that the PAPFA workshops helped that with the skills and awareness that they can improve their livelihoods if they have a common vision. They now believe in themselves and the feeling of self-worth.*

*One youth in Ward 15, Tsholotsho, shared that he had lost hope in life and had abandoned his family due to a host of problems he had faced. After attending the PACS, he submitted that he got to view life with a different lens and he realised his self-worth, he then decided to go back home and supplement his "O" Level subjects. He attributed the shift to the PACS workshops he attended and has also reached out to fellow youths to put resources together and start small in a bid to influence each other in a positive way and improve their livelihoods.*

*Adults who attended the PAPFA workshops shared how they realised their ignorance of their self-worth and lack of taking ownership of community projects and how this led them to remain poor. The PAPFA workshops helped them to take ownership and also support each other.*

*Participants were able to talk about their experiences and feelings with regards to the effects of COVID 19 and how this is still affecting them. Some found solace in realising and listening to others also sharing and hence noted that a number of people were affected.*



## IRCT SURVIVOR ENGAGEMENT PROJECT

In 2022, IRCT Regional partners and other relatable organisations from Cameroon, Chad, Kenya, Rwanda, Senegal, Somalia, South Africa, Uganda, and Zimbabwe attended a ten-day training workshop in Zimbabwe funded by International Rehabilitation for Torture Victims (IRCT). The Tree of Life (ToL) trained partners on their Survivor Engagement (SE) methodology. In addition, the Partners observed and participated in workshops with survivors from both rural (Murewa) and urban (Chitungwiza) communities. Following the workshop, many partners began implementing SE methodologies in their work. In 2023, ToL received another grant from IRCT to follow up with regional partners, leading to establishment of the SE Community of Practice (CoP) group for virtual meetings.

### Objectives of the follow-up activities included:

- Facilitate regular sharing of best practices and experiences related to SE.
- Strengthen the network and solidarity among regional partners.
- Provide emotional and moral support to members.
- Explore opportunities for sustainability with joint fundraising and partnerships beyond the project period, making it a regional movement for SE.

These sessions have provided great opportunities for partners to share their work and feedback on the SE methodology application. Opportunities for joint fundraising have been explored, generating a lot of interest to partner and leverage the strengths of the different organisations. The Partners are urging each other to do more research on their work for evidence best practices and to share findings. Tree of Life is excited to share the findings of the Meta Evaluation that will be done at the beginning of 2024, on work undertaken from 2014 to 2023.



## EVIDENCE BASE INITIATIVES

Tree of Life continued their research collaboration with the Washington State University (WSU) and Accountability Lab, where the efficacy of the ToL Psychosocial Awareness and Coping Skills (PACS) will be tested amidst conflict affected groups. In 2023 we conducted 6 PACS workshops for 418 people (94 males and 324 females), this being ToL's contribution to the study. In 2024, WSU and AL will continue working on the study and the findings will be shared once they are made available. In 2013, a Chapter on Tree of Life's work was published the Routledge publication "Groupwork with Refugees and Survivors of Human Rights Abuses - The power of Togetherness" authored by Jude Boyles. The book chapter profiles the history of the Tree of Life trauma healing intervention and delves into the power of the process that uses the tree as a metaphor for life, and a tool to help heal the most painful wounds. Also in 2023, our long-term donor USAID, commissioned The Cloudburst Group to conduct a Longitudinal Meta-evaluation on past Trauma Healing and PACS beneficiaries, dating as far back as 2014. The main purpose of the study was to ascertain if ToL's two key interventions had made a lasting impact in the lives of participating individuals years later, and if so, how. The study included 800 past participants from four communities, being a mixture of Trauma Healing and PACS beneficiaries. The study continued on into 2024 and results will be shared on the ToL website as soon as they are available.

### Key recommendations to USAID/Zimbabwe from The Cloudburst Group Longitudinal Study

- USAID/Zimbabwe should consider designing a follow-on activity to the ToL funded activity that would build off ToL's successes increasing individual and collective well-being and community cohesion. The program should include both intensive, personalized and longer-term care similar to the TH&E as well as wider community workshops and skills trainings, like those offered in the PACS program.
- Future trauma healing program designs should consider a rapid-response mechanism to help ramp up programming during elections and times of political instability and respond to shocks and stressors with targeted refresher trainings and other targeted support.
- Consider adding a focus on youth and school-aged children, given the qualitative data on effectiveness of ToL for preventing substance misuse, increasing civic participation, and reducing violence among youth.
- The TH&E program has shown the most sustained individual level impact, USAID should consider funding this intervention as a successful trauma healing intervention, PACS on the other hand is effective at advancing social reparation and cooperation and is less time and resource intensive. It supports healthy coping skills and mental well-being at a larger scale. However for the greatest impact, these two models should be layered to promote both individual and societal transformation.
- For any future program, consider actively promoting partnerships between future USAID/Zimbabwe programming in trauma healing and other USAID/Zimbabwe programs related to livelihoods and health to maximize impacts of both programs for all participants. In FGDs and KIIs participants repeatedly emphasized the positive reinforcement that occurs when programs to improve physical and mental health are coupled with income generating training.

## YCP1 IMPACT STORIES

*“The YCP project has helped me personally to establish livelihoods income streams for myself. I’m now able to better manage my projects and to monitor and evaluate progress and my targets. Through the capacity building trainings I have developed a number of livelihoods opportunities for myself which include a poultry project, a barbershop and a photocopying and printing shop which I’m able to run from my home. Profits from my businesses are in the range of \$250 per month. The project enabled me to register an organization called Got Your Hand Foundation under notarial deed of trust MA2670/2021. Stayah Fombe a female youth from Chitungwiza is also a founding trustee in this organization. The organization was founded mainly to support youths and adults in our community in addressing issues such as substance abuse, early marriages, and child abuse and peace initiatives to help and support the elderly in the community. I also work closely with other organizations in the community that include Youth Advocates Zimbabwe, Welead Trust, Healthcare and Population Health Solutions. – Makadhunyiswe*

*“I joined YCP back in 2021. I learnt about group dynamics, how to write business proposals and I also attended livelihoods capacity building trainings. My communication skills have improved, I used to be a person who did not know how to talk with people in my community. YCP community led activities have improved my confidence especially to stand in front of people and to address people. As an individual these trainings helped me to open a business of baking and selling of eggs. I can now draft a budget for things I want to grow. On a monthly basis I sell about 24-30 crates depending on the demand. I bake between 8 – 10 cakes a month. If the demand is low I bake scones, muffins and buns. I generate around \$100 a month from the sales. I have also learnt how to market my business in the society and also on social media. I have also learnt about the SWOT analysis to help me in my business. As a group we mainly focus on problems faced by both young girls and boys in our community by providing solutions and also hearing their problems which they are facing in the community. Youth Community led activities have helped us to work together and to support each other in times of need. The project has helped us as a group to create and establish relationships with other organizations and stakeholders in the community. As an individual, I work as a facilitator with various organizations that include Youth Advocates Zimbabwe, Sister 2 Sister, Youth Engage, Grace Generation Organization, Katswe Sisterhood and Shamwari YeMwanasikana. “*

**– Ruvimbo**



## STORIES AND TESTIMONIES

*“I definitely see a great change, especially on the issue of stress. I would repeatedly suffer from stress before Tree of Life interventions. But after an encounter with them and learning, I can now resolve my issues and reduce stress. Even health-wise—I was always sickly, but that has been resolved thanks to the lessons I got from Tree of life on exercises and the breathing exercises... Really, I see a change in ways of life; in fact, I see a great change.” – A Goromonzi Cloudburst Group FGD participant*

A community leader in Bulawayo described another transformative skill imparted by ToL, saying “Tree of Life taught me great listening skills. If you listen well, it’s easier to solve conflicts between people. It also helped me to develop perseverance in order to stick with people until they resolved their conflict. People have to leave you [being] reconciled, with smiles on their faces. I got this skill here, to lead a person who was fighting because of inner wounds to a point of forgiveness and healing.” – **The Cloudburst Group**

Women, both young and older, spoke about the challenge of drugs but were more likely to discuss this as a problem in the community or among men, and were less likely to describe their own use of drugs. The discussion of drug use, including marijuana and crystal meth as well as other substances was particularly active in the FGDs in Chitungwiza. The young men’s discussion in this site had an involved discussion of the challenge of drugs and how ToL programs, and particularly PACS, was especially helpful for quitting drug use. Some men described their own journeys to recovery, and how others had been able to stop drugs and find work due to ToL programs.

As one young man in Chitungwiza described, “[ToL] also showed us how to help people with drug addiction by using persuasion, encouragement, and support instead of scaring them or being aggressive. The program’s success in helping people recover from addiction and other difficulties is remarkable.”

Women and community leaders as well as male youth repeatedly gave the recommendation to bring ToL programs to youth as a way to combat drug use, support health living, and help youth continue in school or get work. As one community leader in Chitungwiza said, “I think [ToL] can focus more on the young adults more. The issue of drug abuse

*has corrupted them a lot, so I am saying if they can focus in this age group and give them counselling. This is because maybe trauma may be the reason why someone may take drugs because they would be struggling a lot and will not have anyone to share this burden with.”*

*As another young man from Harare said, “They also showed us how to help people with drug addiction by using persuasion, encouragement, and support instead of scaring them or being aggressive. The program’s success in helping people recover from addiction and other difficulties is remarkable.*



*“We were so behind in terms of development but now, there is great improvement our cluster. We now have a functional clinic which just needs a repaint. Our community now has a sense of ownership and are doing projects in one accord, including the making of bricks which we intend to use to build school blocks in the community.” – Zambuko Community Cohesion Facilitator*

*“The ToL intervention has changed a lot in people’s lives. It has made people realize their stresses and how to relieve their problems. People now to know how to live in the homes and how to participate more in community projects and share ideas of projects with each other. There has been great change in the community. People now treat and talk to each other with respect. Ideas are being shared and there has been a lot of progress in the community. We expect ToL to bring us more refresher programmes to the Community Cohesion Facilitators and more engagement workshops with the community. I am glad action plans are happening and there is a lot of progress because of the awareness raised. There are initiated small projects that are running like the hatchery project with the help of the incubators from SNV.” - Agritex Supervisor Ward 13, Masvingo*

*Peer facilitators trained by Tree of Life stay in touch and they keep phoning checking on us. Sharing what they are doing, their challenges especially they convince their peers to do good and have good relations in the community. They have a great show on the responsibility – WHH Project beneficiary*



*“I am a single mother and was really sceptical in joining this project due to my situation. I joined the training and realised that being a single mother is not the end of the road. The Tree of Life Youth trainings helped me to appreciate myself, the skills that I have and the role that I can play working together with my group mates for the development of my community. I have learnt that there is power in working together” – Chinhoyi Youth participant*

*“My son is a known drug addict and was really stressing me before ToL came to our community. He used to focus more on drugs and I struggled to guide him. His behaviour changed when he went for the group dynamics training. He is now obedient and he has stopped taking drugs. I appreciate the opportunity for him to interact with other progressive young people and the training has helped him on an individual level to rethink his life choices” – feedback from a Chinhoyi parent*

*“Standing in front of people was a huge nightmare for me. I was a shy person, very scared and at first I thought it was difficult to speak in front of people. In the training we were all given the opportunity to speak and make presentations in front of a huge crowd of youths. Seeing other young people make contributions gave me the confidence and courage to also participate. You need to be confident and own the space. This is what I received from the group dynamics training. I got my confidence back” –Entumbane Youth participant*



Katja Kuivanen



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