



ANNUAL REPORT 2021





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Who We Are and What We Do

Who we are:

The Tree of Life Trust Zimbabwe is a non-governmental organisation whose vision is to create a healed and empowered society that puts its energy into processes of peace, recovery and reconciliation. We provide community-based mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) approaches that help communities, families and individuals living with trauma to reconnect with self, nature, family and community. Through a network of approximately 100 Community-based Facilitators, Tree of Life works in eight provinces across Zimbabwe. In 2021 the Tree of Life community reached over 97,500 people with various MHPSS services, most of which focused on Covid-19 psychosocial support.

What we do:

- Trauma Healing and Empowerment (TH&E) workshops for victims of violence.
- Psychosocial Awareness and Coping Skills (PACS) workshops to foster effective community engagement, collaboration and cohesion.
- Psychosocial First Aid (PFA) workshops to help communities cope with the social and psychological impact of sudden shocks.
- Covid-19 Psychosocial, and Bereavement and Loss Support to communities.
- Referrals as part of the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services (MHPSS) continuum of care.
- Trauma Informed Care, and Trauma Awareness workshops for other NGOs.
- Self-Care workshops for organisations working in challenging conditions.
- Training and capacity building for Community-based Facilitators.
- Working with young people to create communities of peace.
- Collaborations with other like-minded organisations.
- Supporting National Transitional Justice, Healing and Reconciliation processes.

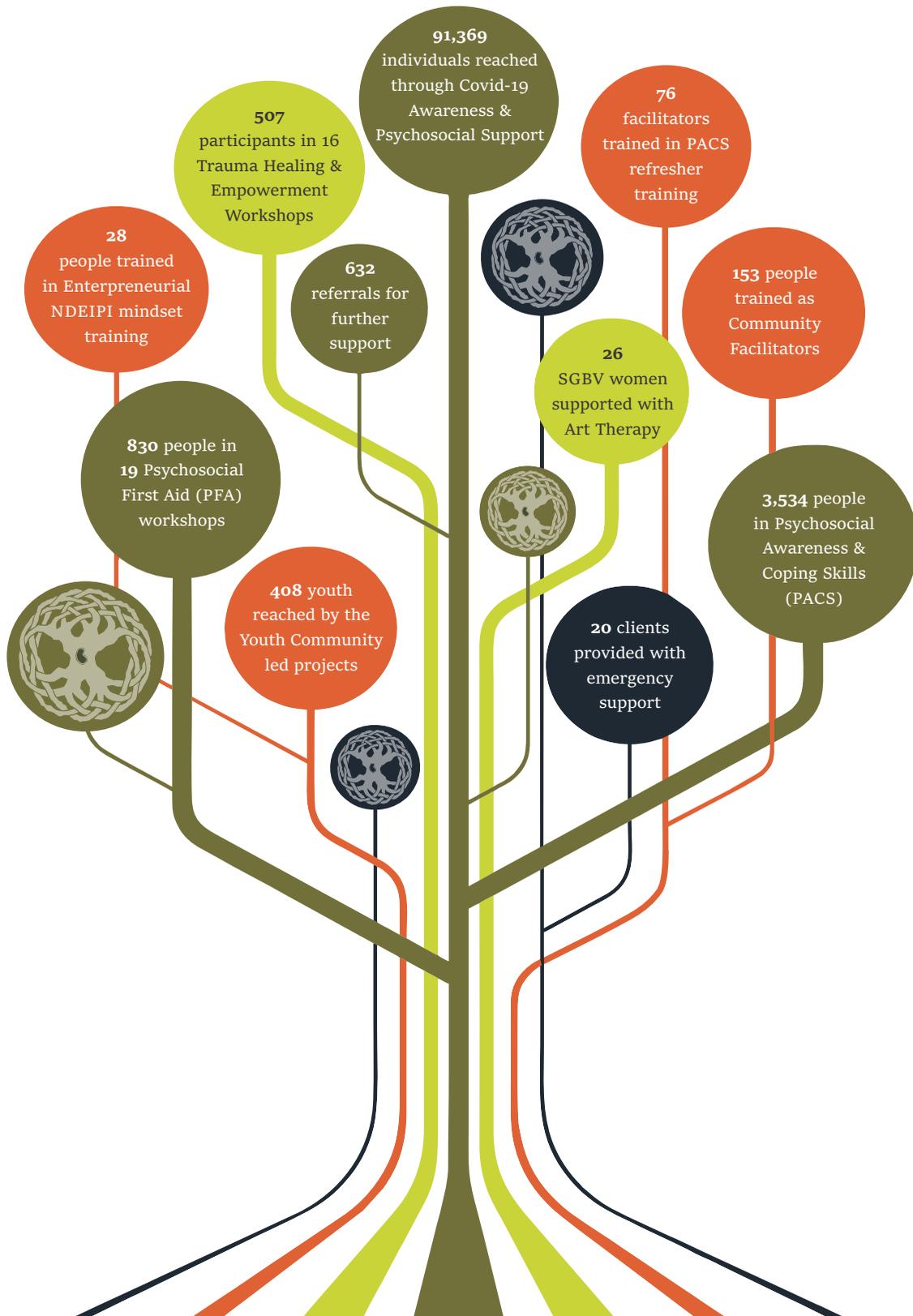
Between 2003 to 2021 we have:

- Facilitated over 1,900 trauma healing workshops for over 15,500 victims of organised violence and torture.
- Trained over 150 community-based survivors as Community-based trauma healing Facilitators.
- Provided psychoeducation workshops for over 12,260 people, including community leaders, youth, women, communities and NGO staff.
- Trained over 70 community-based survivors to conduct psychoeducation and psychosocial first aid workshops.
- Reached 157,938 people with Covid-19 Psychosocial support and awareness.
- Developed Training modules in: Psychosocial Awareness and Coping Skills (PACS); Psychosocial First Aid (PFA); Trauma Informed Care (TIC) Practices; Self-Care; Covid-19, and Bereavement and Loss support; Training in Mentorship Skills for Mental Health.
- Facilitated workshops for, and partnered with, over 10 other Civil Society Organisations.

Our Values

These are listed below and defined as follows:

Value	Definition
RESPECT	We treat others as equals and embrace our differences.
RESPONSIBILITY	We accept our duty of mutual care and to make constructive contributions.
INTEGRITY	We are honest and transparent in all that we do. We listen intently and speak with honesty.
CONNECTION	We believe in the power of community and seek to build collaborations and partnerships.



2021 Overview

over 97,500 people reached

Chairperson's Letter

It is with pleasure that I present you with the Tree of Life Annual Report for 2021.

The year was one of contrasts and changes for the organisation, as we continued to grapple with the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the nation, and the implications for our work. The Tree of Life team were required to utilise all of their creative capacities to adapt and innovate to new working modalities, and to show great resilience as they and their families were personally affected by the pandemic. There was sadness during the year, as we mourned members of the Big Tree who were lost to the pandemic, and our condolences go out to their families and their colleagues in the community groups.

Despite this, however, the core Tree of Life team, and the Community Facilitators network we work through, rose to the many challenges and were able to deliver quality programmes to address the social effects of the pandemic. This was such impressive commitment at a remarkable scale. Both the core team and the networks in the community have again demonstrated their capacity to overcome the numerous challenges and barriers that the pandemic has thrown up to deliver ground breaking Covid-awareness and psychosocial support, reaching tens of thousands of people. I would like to extend gratitude and appreciation to the Tree of Life Core Team and the Big Tree of Community Facilitators for the tremendous amount they achieved in such demanding circumstances. They are an inspiration to us all.

At the end of the year we bade farewell to our long serving Board Chairperson, Dr. Rev. Ray Motsi along with Board members, Verity Mundy and Rose Marie Depp as well as Board Advisor, Sonia Pereira. They will be sorely missed, and we are grateful for their support and wisdom over their period of Board membership. They have played a major part in guiding Tree of Life



in our trajectory of growth and development, and we are delighted that Ray and Sonia remain part of the Elders group. We welcome Farai Samhungu, Sikathele Matambo and Ross Parsons to the Board for 2022, who we know will add value to our work and support us as we reflect on the strategic direction of the organisation.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I wish to thank the many funders who have supported our work, and the many partners, too numerous to mention, whom we have collaborated with to further our vision of a peaceful, cohesive and resilient Zimbabwe.

Jessica Pwiti

**"I learnt that health issues start in the mind; stress and trauma affects a person's health"
Zambuko PACS participant.**

Director's Foreword

As you will see, when you read this Annual Report, 2021 was, in many ways, an exciting year which presented a number of opportunities for Tree of Life (ToL) to develop our work. It was also a year that presented daunting challenges which required agility and adaptability to navigate, but which also provided openings for learning and expansion.

Covid-19 continued to have an impact on the country as a whole and especially in the early months of 2021, in what was probably the most difficult phases of the pandemic so far for Zimbabwe. It meant that the tailored healing and psychosocial support activities we had developed in 2020 became even more relevant and necessary. The adapted model of remote support in trauma affected communities was scaled-up, as we modified and expanded the training modules to respond to the feedback we were receiving from communities about how Covid-19 was affecting the social support structures and resilience. The programme was implemented through trained Community Facilitators, ably supported by the Tree of Life Core Team. These committed Community-based Facilitators, although directly affected themselves, with many losing family members, close friends and neighbours, were able to reach and assist over 90,000 community members with awareness, psychosocial support and trauma healing interventions of various kinds, and act as a referral mechanism for specialist support services.

Tree of Life's contribution to the Zambuko Project in Masvingo enabled us to demonstrate and evidence what we have believed for a long time; supporting healing and community cohesion is integral to resilience building for development, and that humanitarian activities need to incorporate these elements into their programming for long term impact.

Despite the challenges of responding to the impact of the pandemic at community level in a

constrained operating environment, we have been excited about the growing interest, both locally and internationally, in Tree of Life's work. There is a growing acknowledgement that collective approaches to trauma healing and recovery are socially and culturally relevant and more appropriate both regionally and further afield, and that the Tree of Life models how to implement this collective approach. ToL's unique community-based, group-based work has been featured in a major new book to be published in 2022 by Routledge showcasing global good practice. ToL was also invited to co-host a networking session of the Boston Trauma Research Foundation Social Justice Summit with the Tata Institute of Social Sciences. These activities, amongst many more, have led to partnerships with academic institutions and training organisations in India, Australia and the United States, and has prompted us to invest more in documenting our work and evidencing its impact.

Of course, none of this innovation and impact would have happened without the incredible commitment and hard work by our network of dedicated Community Facilitators, supported by the core Tree of Life team. Both groups have adapted to the demands of the pandemic with skill and dedication. The partnerships that have grown with other civil society organisations over the year have also contributed to the increased depth and holistic nature of ToL's work, and we value these partnerships greatly. We are immensely grateful to all the funders - both institutional and private - who supported Tree of Life in 2021, and have provided the platform for us to scale-up and expand our work, and support the nation to heal and recover. Gratitude also goes to our knowledgeable and experienced Board of Trustees who donate so much of their time to support and guide our work.

Lynn Walker

Trauma Healing and Empowerment Workshops

One of Tree of Life's core interventions is the Trauma Healing and Empowerment (TH&E) workshop. This is a group-based, community-rooted approach supporting survivors of trauma to begin to heal. Using the tree as a metaphor for life, and locally adapted, this approach is similar to the Narrative Therapy approach. A healing workshop combines storytelling with healing of the emotions and connections. The 3-day workshop involves groups of approximately 8 participants each, supporting and witnessing each other as they go through a structured healing process. In 2021, Tree of Life conducted 16 Trauma Healing and Empowerment Workshops for 507 people, being 167 men (33%) and 340 women (67%).

Using the World Health Organisation SRQ-20 psychometric tool, all 507 clients were screened for symptoms of anxiety, depression and PTSD before the workshop. Clients scoring 7 or more on the SRQ-20 are considered to be 'clinical cases', whilst clients scoring 10 or more are 'severe cases', all in need of further support. In order to measure impact and track mental well-being, clients are followed-up for a second assessment. In 2021, 403 (79%) clients were followed up 3 months or more after their healing workshop for post-assessment. Impact results are seen in the data below.



- Before the TH&E workshop, the most common SRQ-20 score was '10', whilst the average SRQ-20 score was a very high '12', indicating that most clients were severe cases. At follow-up, both the mode and average score dropped to a healthy mental well-being score of '3'.
- Before the TH&E workshop, 379 (94%) clients were clinical cases. At follow up just 9 (2%) remained clinical.
- Of these, 246 clients (61%) were severe cases before the TH&E workshop. At follow up no severe cases were present, being 100% success rate.
- Initially, 32 of the 403 clients harboured suicidal ideations. At follow-up one case remained.

Pre and Post SRQ-20 Trauma Healing and Empowerment data analysis in 2021, n=403

2021 TH&E Clients followed up				Follow up rate in 2021 = 79%	
SRQ-20 analysis	Before	%	After	%	Difference between scores at follow-up
Most common SRQ-20 score	10		3		Most common SRQ drop was by 7 symptoms
Average SRQ-20 score	12		3		Average SRQ score dropped by 9 symptoms
Clinical cases (7 and above)	379	94.04	9	1.23	99% of clinical cases were no longer clinical
Severe cases (10 and above)	246	61.04	0	0	98% of severe cases were no longer severe
Suicidal ideations	32	7.94	1	0	Suicidal ideation cases dropped from 32 to 1

“I learnt on how to forgive and open up. The process changed my mind to a positive one.”
 – TH&E participant

Psychosocial First Aid (PFA)

Psychosocial First Aid (PFA) is built on the premise that if people are supported immediately after a traumatic exposure then this will build resilience. In 2021, the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT), provided Tree of Life (ToL) with funding for the production of a PFA Trainers Manual, and an initial pilot workshop. After the successful pilot, ToL then rolled out a Training of Trainers, and a series of PFA workshops under the Community Healing and Cohesion project.

In 2021, Tree of Life conducted 19 PFA training workshops for 809 people, being 264 males and 545 females. Furthermore, 4 Training of Trainer workshops were held with 90 ToL Community-based Facilitators (53 males and 37 females), from 8 provinces around Zimbabwe.

PFA workshops equip communities to help both themselves and their community peers to deal with sudden shocks and traumas, using locally available networks and resources where possible. The 'Action Principles of Psychological First Aid, LOOK, LISTEN AND LINK', is used.

The main goals of PFA are to:

- Address basic needs and reduce psychological distress by providing a caring and comforting presence.
- Normalise survivor's feelings, and help them find and use existing and effective ways of coping with their stress if they need it.
- Referring to natural support networks and appropriate services where there is a need.

The PFA workshops helped to identify relevant and practical issues that can build resilience on the ground. Each community discussed solutions to dealing with sudden trauma. Many reported that if sudden emergencies occurred, they would be able to support people affected.

They also went on to identify day to day issues that need rapid response PFA, such as domestic violence and suicidal cases. The workshops also helped community members identify, and obtain contact details of other organisations or people who are working to help communities deal with abuse.



**“The workshop helped me to build my esteem and recognise my abilities and skills”
– A participant, Chitungwiza, September 2021**

Psychosocial Awareness and Coping Skills (PACS) Workshops

Tree of Life conducts a psychoeducation intervention, the Psychosocial Awareness and Coping Skills (PACS) workshop, for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), community leaders and communities at large, including men, women and youth. PACS builds awareness on the impact of trauma on resilience, and helps communities to find ways to cope. Workshops are held with large groups of community members who collectively identify the factors causing stress and trauma in their communities, along with barriers and enablers of development. Together they find ways to cope at individual, family and community level. Groups also support each other in the development of joint community action plans geared towards improving social cohesion, community collaboration and sustainable development, using locally available resources.

In 2021, Tree of Life conducted 69 in-person PACS workshops for 3,534 people, being 815 men and 2,719 women. The majority of the workshops were held under the Zambuko Livelihoods Project, in collaboration with the World Food Programme, where ToL's role was to build social cohesion. In addition to the PACS workshops, ToL continued to mentor local Community Cohesion Facilitators (CCFs), who helped their respective communities resolve conflicts as they emerged during the implementation of community action plans.

A few testimonies from community leaders followed up:

"We have been blindfolded by our egos and hate for a very long time and during this time we did not do anything to develop as individuals or as a community. We relied so much on donor and government handouts and we could not see beyond. Thank you Tree of Life - now we can come together as a people and discuss issues

that affect us as a community. This was not happening before. I want to thank you for your good programs and I can tell you that going forward we will never be the same again. Of course we cannot see complete change suddenly but what we have seen so far is a promise for a better future, a better community which come together and resolve differences and move on. I thank you a hundred times, keep up the good work!"- A Masvingo Headman



"Our community has drastically shifted from being a community full of hate, competition, individualism, conflict to a community which is geared for success, fight poverty together and continue working together. Leaders whom I have spoken with so far are reporting that they are amazed by the shift in behaviours of some people whom they had labelled as rebellious, problematic and those who did not want to work with others. Speaking to the Councillor, he expressed that "development has become a chorus whenever people gather and are keen to take initiatives." This has made the councillors development task easy and with this we hope to end the mentality of begging. Thank you ToL may you be blessed and reach out to many other people. We will invite you to have a talk with all leaders and stakeholders who are working in our

community” – a Masvingo Chief

“I personally thought that men are the only ones that could stand before a congregation and address them. I had no confidence of being a leader but after ToL workshops I became empowered and I now have the courage to also stand before many people and address them”.
 – a female participant



“We have seen so many problems because of donor funded projects. People did not have the knowledge on how to work together, but with the coming of ToL there is great change on how the community is taking up projects. There were a lot of complaints in the leadership office but now there are few disputes coming to us as leaders.” – A Masvingo Ward Councillor

“I thank ToL for coming to ward 16. Social Welfare vetting came recently and the program went on well without any noise and disputes like what used to happen. It has showed us as the community leaders the impact of the PACS



workshop on social cohesion in the ward.”
 - A Community member

“We are so happy to have WFP choose us to work with Tree of Life. We are a responsible people now. We have seen efforts by Mwenenzi District Training Center to support people with livelihoods projects bearing fruits. People are given goats and chickens and are working hard to multiply them and pass on to the others. The levels of commitment are just encouraging and people are supporting each other very well. This has never happened in our community in our life time. There used to be competition, dependency on donor handouts, people did not want to work, let alone work together. Conflicts of all types were the order of life in the ward. Ever since the ToL workshops, there is a sense of responsibility in the mass, people talk to each other well, support each other, respect leaders and are taking ownership of the projects and are vowing to continue even after the donor leaves. We attribute all this the PACS workshop which worked wonders in changing the people`s mind-set. Yes challenges are still there but there is great change and even the people who did not directly attend the workshops, in a way they are being transformed by the transformation of those who attended. Thank you ToL. We are sure as leaders we will not be found wanting by donors because people will never be as wasteful and irresponsible as they used to be.”
 - A Mwenenzi Leader





Please note: only photo's taken after March 2020 will show people wearing masks.





Covid-19 Psychosocial Support and Awareness

In 2021, Tree of Life reached 91,369 people across 15 communities, with Covid-19 psychosocial support, to help address the trauma and social fragmentation caused by the pandemic. Of these, 19,952 (9,382 men and 10,750 women) were directly mobilised by ToL Community-based Facilitators. 71,417 people were reached through groups mobilised by other community structures, such as church groups, community meetings etc. Beneficiaries were engaged from a variety of levels around Covid-19 prevention, the implications of the pandemic in their lives and in their communities, as well as with ways to cope better.

Restructuring MHPSS in the midst of a pandemic through action learning

During lockdown, ToL continued to adjust and adapt programming. We restructured our work through an action learning cycle, and in accordance with the Inter Agency Standing Committee's (IASC) MHPSS pyramid. In summary we increased our Level 1 and 2 activities:

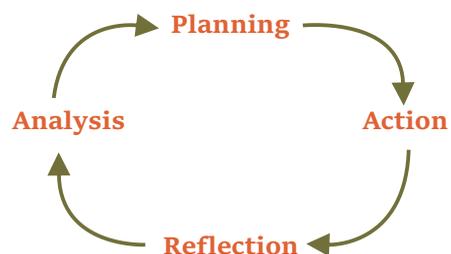
- Linking with programs targeting social welfare and livelihoods,
- and preventative measures by way of strengthening family and community systems and social capital.

This was achieved through awareness raising, information provision and knowledge sharing.

The action learning cycle is a way of formalising and deliberately learning as a collective through a set of activities in a program. It consists of Planning, Action, Reflection and Analysis. The action learning cycle allowed us to respond to needs in the community in real time as the context changed. In particular this focused on capacity building activities for our youth

ambassadors and the 'Big Tree' that would support them to engage adequately and appropriately in their communities.

- Our **Planning** activities consisted of online participatory training and curriculum development, based on needs expressed through the Analysis phase. Many social ills in the communities were identified and these guided training content. Training to provide MHPSS support was designed by an external consultant with expertise in transcultural mental health and trauma, the Training and Supervision Manager, and the Project Coordinator.
- Our **Action** activities consisted of online training for the core "Small Tree" staff initially, through pre-recorded videos and online material. Then the training team and Small Tree would participate in a supervision session together, to share learnings, make adjustments or highlight key learnings. Thereafter, training and materials on particular topics or themes would be cascaded to the community Big Tree and youth ambassadors. The Big Tree could then reach out to sets of people in their communities with the materials created.
- Our **Reflection** activities included monitoring and feedback activities groups. From the Big Tree to Small Tree, there would be regular online communication about the material shared, what was working or not, and what other needs



were arising. The Small Tree and the consultant would then have online reflective and restorative debriefing sessions.

- Our **Analysis** activities included reviewing emerging themes coming out from the communities, acknowledging and identifying expressed needs, solidifying effective learning and feedback processes, and recording data. These activities would then feed into our next Planning activity, where we could make adjustments and navigate training according to real time issues.

This feedback mechanism informed the process and helped us be relevant to changing needs. It also helped in the early identification, referral and linking of people in need of further support. The adjustments meant an increased focus on awareness-raising activities, psychoeducation, health promotion activities and general resilience building.

Reports from the ToL Community Facilitators on the ground indicated that the following recurring themes emerged as they interfaced with community members around the distresses they faced during the pandemic. These included but were not limited to:

- A general increase in stress, trauma, depression, anxiety and PTSD
- Increased hopelessness and suicidal thoughts, particularly amongst youth
- Fear of catching Covid-19
- This deterioration in mental well-being



reflects in:

- Increased drug and substance abuse
- Increase in risky behaviour amongst youth
- Increased hunger and poverty
- Unemployment and loss of livelihoods
- Large rise in the cost of living
- Increased domestic violence and sexual gender-based violence
- Increase in child abuse, early pregnancies and child marriages
- Increased transactional sex, by young people, as a means of getting money
- Lack of clarity around food distribution
- General lack of awareness about
- Covid-19
- Fear of taking the Covid-19 vaccine due to ill-informed social media and lack of awareness. Belief that herbal remedies were better than the Covid-19 vaccine.
- Lack of access to medication, defaulting on HIV medication due to movement restrictions.

Feedback from the Big Tree Community Facilitators highlighted that there was significant behaviour change after they began to provide awareness and support to communities. For example, many who were consulted chose to get vaccinated, and began intentionally wearing masks, and observing social distancing practices. ToL Facilitators were also empowered enough to diffuse large gatherings and resolve conflicts related to funerals, where it was customary to gather en-masse. Sessions on myths and fake news around Covid-19 were also held. This included discussion on the differences between natural and traditional medicines, as compared to vaccinations. This led to an attitude change where people accepted that whilst these medicines are helpful, they may not be good enough. Although broader social issues were not eradicated, beneficiaries felt better informed and equipped and greatly appreciated the psychosocial support provided.

“With the Covid-19 training, I have been able to support my fellow youths who had lost hope and were indulging in drugs and sex work” – A ToL Youth Facilitator

Working with Young People

Working with Young People

In 2021 the ToL team successfully ran two projects with young people concurrently; the Youth Engagement for Peace Project (YEPP) and the Youth Community-led Projects (YCP). The projects were conducted in 6 partner communities; Epworth, Mabvuku, Chitungwiza, Chinhoyi, Nketa and Entumbane. Two new communities (Goromonzi and Nkayi) were added in late 2021.

YEPP capacitates young people to provide their communities with peacebuilding and social cohesion support, whilst YCP provides them with the skills and knowledge to undertake practical hands-on projects to develop their communities.

Under the YEPP project, young people were instrumental in providing Covid-19 psychosocial support and awareness to 29,659 people (being a part of ToL's global reach of 91,309). Of these, the youth personally mobilized 5,404 people (2,433 males and 2,971 females) on their own. They then disseminated information and psychosocial support to an additional 24,252 people who were mobilized by other community groups. Also under YEPP in 2021, Ndeipi Business Trainings were held for 33 youths (22 females and 11 males) from

Chinhoyi, Nketa and Entumbane respectively. Ndeipi challenges participants to think 'out of the box' and create start-up businesses with as little as US\$1. They were able to explore innovative ways of starting up small businesses, and proposed buying and selling of small products such as sweets, vegetables, masks and earrings, as a start.

With thanks to a more relaxed Covid-19 lockdown environment in the second half of the year, the innovative Youth Community-led project (YCP) was able to gain momentum.

In 2021, a total of 241 Youth were identified for participation in the YCP project, being 105 males and 136 females. The youth were identified from 6 YCP partner communities, being Chinhoyi, Chitungwiza, Entumbane, Epworth, Mabvuku and Nketa. The following activities were conducted during the year.

Project Design Training workshops were held for 201 youth, being 86 males and 115 females. The overall aim of the training was to equip and empower youth groups with skills and knowledge, to better design and manage community and livelihoods projects, whilst at the same time, promoting peace and community cohesion in the target communities.



Topics covered during the training included (i) Designing, Planning and Managing a Project, (ii) Accounting for funding, (iii) Monitoring and Evaluation skills, (iv) Reporting skills, (v) Negotiation skills, (vi) Advocacy skills, and (vii) group registration standards and requirements. Pre and post workshop assessments saw an increase in the knowledge and awareness average up from 50% before the workshop, to 72% after.

A six-member **Panel of Experts** committee was established for purposes of reviewing and approving proposals submitted by the youth during the course of the project. Panel members were drawn from ToL's departments that include Programmes, Knowledge Management and Finance.

Group Dynamics and Group formation trainings were conducted for 153 youths (84 females and 69 males) across the 6 communities. It is critical that young people are orientated around the dynamics of working together before they start! Topics covered during the training include, (i) Introduction to youth groups, (ii) Types of groups, (iii) roles and responsibilities of groups, (iv) team building, (vi) developing group constitutions and (vii) Tree of Life/YCP project expectations. Tree of Life administered pre and post evaluation tools to measure the knowledge before and after the training.



Peer Review workshops were held for 181 young people, being 73 males and 108 females. Peer review workshops are a platform where young people gather to co-design proposals that are relevant to the needs of their communities, as well as cross-pollinate ideas with other youth groups as to how to improve their proposals. For ToL, the peer review workshop is a critical platform to evaluate the effectiveness of the project design trainings. A total of 13 draft community project ideas/proposals were collectively discussed by the youth groups, who began by spotlighting community challenges prevalent in their respective communities, and proffering solutions that the young people might explore to address the challenges.

Collaborations with Other Organisations

In 2021 Tree of Life (ToL) continued to partner and collaborate with other Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) either as an implementing partner, or as a technical partner.

ToL continued as an implementing partner in the **World Food Programme (WFP) Zambuko Livelihoods Initiative**, facilitating processes to strengthen social cohesion and equitable resource management for increased resilience. We also became a Technical Partner in the **Catholic Relief Services (CRS) Asikhulume project** in Lupane and Tsholotsho Districts, and continued to be a Technical Partner with **Ukuthula Trust** on a project funded through **Nunca Mas**.

Collaboration with the **International Rehabilitation Center for Torture Victims (IRCT)** was strengthened with ToL becoming a regional champion of the Global Rehabilitation

Standards, and a member of their Survivor Engagement Project Steering Committee.

In January ToL made a presentation at the **Trauma Research Foundation (TRF) Social Justice Summit**; a high profile forum for mental health specialists from the US and internationally. As a result of this a collaboration was established with **Tata Institute for Social Sciences (TISS)**, to jointly implement a training programme addressing Covid related trauma and stress.

Tree of Life remains an active member of the **Matabeleland Forum**, the **National Transitional Justice Working Group (NTJWG)**, and continues to participate in meetings and events for both networks. ToL also continued to be an active member of the **Human Rights NGO Forum** and was elected to sit on the Forum's Board at the 2021 AGM.



Trauma
Research
Foundation



Referrals for Further Support

Tree of Life utilises a continuum of care, mental health and psychosocial support approach. Clients in need of further MHPSS support within communities are provided with one-on-one support either by our Community-based Facilitators, or by our core team. When deemed necessary, clients are then referred on to other specialists for further support. In 2021, 632 people were referred to ToL for further MHPSS support. Of these, 203 were men and 429 were women.

Art Therapy Workshops for Human Trafficking Survivors

Art therapy is a specialised form of therapy designed to help people with high trauma levels begin to heal and recover. In Zimbabwe, very few Civil Society organisations are providing post trafficking support for survivors of Trafficking in Persons (TIP). Through the Community Healing and Cohesion (CHC) project, ToL continued to provide much needed psychosocial support to TIP survivors. In 2021, Art Therapy sessions were undertaken with two groups of 14 and 16 TIP survivors from the Zimbabwe Trafficking in Persons Advocacy (ZTIPA). The women were part of a returnee group of who were trafficked to Kuwait in 2017-2018. Sessions were designed to help them overcome the trauma they faced as a result of being trafficked, and to restore agency. The women noted that although the therapy process had taken them through painful memories, the experience was very restorative. They now feel ready to establish their own NGO to support other TIP victims.

During the Grief and Loss session – using a rosebush as an analogy - many women broke down as they reflected on their art pieces, and related them to the trauma they had to deal with during their trafficking ordeal. Some of them lost relatives who judged them, relationships with children, husbands and friends. Many lost assets which they sold to go to Kuwait, others lost jobs which they gave up. The loss of relationships coupled with the loss of dignity and self-worth was a lot for the



women to take in. They were guided to paint the story of their grief and loss as a rose bush – most of them were either just black in colour, or black and red.

At the end of the grief and loss session the women were then tasked to paint a rose-bush in line with a story of how they wish their lives to be, from now on and in the future. By painting over the same painting of despair and darkness, the rose bushes were transformed into colour, life and joy. The transformation of their art showed them that they too have the ability to change their own lives and stories into one of beauty, colour and joy - from one of pain, darkness and despair.

“For the first time since my return from Kuwait I have been able to share my full story to others. I was previously ashamed to tell people the whole story and would only tell them what I thought they needed to hear. But now, because of the ART therapy sessions, I feel free to share my entire ordeal with others.” – ToL Art therapy trafficking survivor



Stories from the Field

Young and inspired by Tree of Life!

Maka is a young man who has been working with Tree Of Life (ToL) for many years. He is grateful to have participated in various interventions through ToL. These included the Trauma Healing and Empowerment (TH&E) workshop, the Psychosocial Awareness and Coping Skills (PACS) workshop, Ndeipi Business Training, and Baking training.

“Life was not going on well, I felt stressed and could not share or open up to anyone. Thank God ToL came and empowered me. I can now do a lot by myself. Life was a narrow road, but because of ToL I have experienced a lot and saw great opportunities in the community. I have helped a number of youth to refine themselves.”

Inspired to make a change, Maka formed a group called Mamero in his community to support the youths. The Mamero group does poultry, dancing lessons for young people, Drug awareness and “Stop Early Child Marriages” awareness raising. The group has also opened a barber in the community to help creating employment for youth. Maka says,

“I would like to encourage youths to stop drug abuse and find projects to do and keep themselves occupied. ToL has empowered me, I can now facilitate youth programmes in or community.”



He acknowledged that TH&E workshop helped him a lot, as he could not share his problems before. Now he can open up to his friends and elders when he has some problems.

“I used to stress myself a lot- I could not share my problems in other words I was anti-social. Through TOL I am now a social person I can now joke with other people and share my problems.”

A Better Leader because of the Trauma Healing and Empowerment workshop

A traditional leader - a Headman in Gwanda - attended a Trauma Healing and Empowerment (TH&E) workshop at Gqalaza in 2020. He shared that he was a horrible leader before the experience.

“I attended these healing workshops sometime in 2020 and since then my life as a father and a local leader (Headman) has changed for the better. I urge all of you here to take what you are about to experience seriously. This is a really life-changing intervention, given that every one of us have had painful experiences. I was a hopeless leader and most of you here remember how I was tormenting you 2 years ago. Some of you wonder what really happened to me to be this progressive and respectful leader I am today. I have found meaning in life, meaning in all the past sad experiences that I went through during the Gukurahundi era and before. I am able to move on and hope for the best things in life. I wish the same for all of you as you were so lucky to get a chance to be selected to attend this workshop. If we continue to have more people receiving this, I foresee this community developing and living in peace and harmony”.

The headman encouraged other participants to take the lessons positively, that they would have learnt from the workshop, as it would give meaning to their lives.

Psychosocial First Aid – “A True education!”

A social worker who attended a Psychosocial First Aid Workshop (PFA) in Entumbane acknowledged that she thought she knew everything as she is a University graduate. She admitted the PFA workshop has given her a great skill in life that she appreciates.

“This PFA workshop has equipped me with unprecedented skills, the greatest one being the understanding that sometimes people behave the way they do because of what they experience in life as well as their background. This has helped me to be tolerant and not to judge other people. I realised there are some people that I have been failing to work with, thinking that they are actual misfits, are actual people whom I could work with in a more meaningful way - if only I had had this knowledge earlier.”



Taking Covid-19 psychosocial support to practical levels

“The Covid Awareness work we did with ToL and the Bereavement, Grief Loss and Mourning made us realise that the people in the community needed our support, especially us the Community Facilitators staying in the community. As a team, we made a resolution to help our community curb the spread of Covid after realizing that they had challenge of sanitizing their hands due to the unavailability of money to buy the material. We requested for donations from the NGOs working in our Community and also the business people. We distributed the Sanitisers to the homesteads in the community people. We also encouraged the people to mask up all the time and vaccinate. All our women groups are now vaccinated as a result.” – Buhera Facilitator



“My life is full of ups and downs but giving up isn’t the solution.”
Chitungwiza TH&E Participant, March 2020

