



FPAR ENDLINE REPORT

Rethinking power
and cross-movement
building and networks:
Strengthening women's
voice, power and safety
to address gender-
based violence

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and networks: Strengthening women's voice,
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violence**

Conceptualisation: Alexa Bradley, Anna Davis-van Es and Lucy Mazingi

JASS SNA Team: Melania Chiponda and Martha Tholanah

Advisors: Yaliwe Clarke, Grace Malera and Fortunate Machingura

Editor: Andrea Meeson

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INTRODUCTION

This Endline Study is based on the 3-year Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR) process that Just Associates Southern Africa (JASS SNA) has carried out from 2019 to 2022. During this period, JASS worked with women activists to conduct FPAR in twelve sites in Zimbabwe and Malawi, six in each country. The process, under the theme *“Rethinking power and cross-movement building and networks: Strengthening women’s voice, power and safety to address gender-based violence”*, intended to identify and analyse key drivers of structural violence that women in Malawi and Zimbabwe continue to experience and support the development of women-led solutions to Gender-Based Violence from the bottom up. Through a power-gender analysis and framework, women developed and initiated specific action strategies for new rounds of organising and advocacy on structural violence that emerged from this process.

Carried out between December 2022 and March 2023, the Endline Study did not only intent to evaluate the impact of the FPAR process, but also to:

1. enhance mutual learning and understand if the FPAR assisted JASS and the activists involved to reach their goals;
2. learn about what works and what does not work and, in this way, deepen our theory of change and our impact;
3. document and share learnings and feedback from and with activists, partners and allies;
4. be a source of learning and inspiration to other feminist movements, collectives and organisations;
5. identify opportunities and mitigate risks.

CONTEXT

The implementation of the FPAR started in 2020 during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The outbreak of COVID-19 has negatively affected economies, regional integration, social cohesion and health systems in the Southern Africa region and throughout the continent. To avert the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the AU member states adopted a strategy that is targeted at avoiding severe illness and loss of life from COVID-19 and reducing social and economic disruptions. This was further strengthened by establishing the Coronavirus Fund with pledges totalling USD 20 million. Most African countries, including Zimbabwe and Malawi, put in place Lockdowns, compulsory testing of suspected cases and contact tracing as they attempted to contain the virus's spread. The Pan-African Parliament (PAP) urged its members to make sure that the AU member states allocate enough funding for their healthcare systems to respond to the demands imposed by COVID-19, noting that inadequate healthcare facilities impede the continent's response to COVID-19¹. In both Zimbabwe and Malawi, the capacity of the healthcare systems to deal with health crises has been extremely limited. To that end, Zimbabwe had to borrow from the African Development Bank (AfDB) US\$ 13,7 million to strengthen the healthcare system and boost the COVID-19 emergency response.²

Zimbabwe and Malawi have much in common. Both countries' sexual reproductive health rights (SRHR) are inconsistent and not based on a human rights approach to health. The countries do not recognise the rights of LGBTIQ+ to marry,³ and abortion is only limited to proven cases of rape and where the pregnancy threatens the life of the mother and/or the child. Contraceptives and antiretroviral treatment are considered free in public health institutions, but this is subject to availability. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the provision of limited sexual reproductive healthcare (SRH) services in the country after the realisation that SRHR for everyone is essential and requires efforts from stakeholders both in the public and non-governmental sectors, supported by a policy environment that allows access to requisite sexual reproductive health goods and services.

Blind to the fact that most women's incomes are tied to the informal sector, the governments of Malawi and Zimbabwe closed women's markets during the pandemic without any stimulus packages dedicated to the revival and rehabilitation of women's

¹ [African Parliamentarians aim for increased health budgets amid COVID-19 pandemic.](#)

² [Zimbabwe: African Development Bank approves \\$13.7 million to strengthen health system, boost anti-COVID-19 efforts](#)

³ [LGBT Equality Index in Africa | Equaldex](#)

livelihoods and small businesses. Simultaneously, increased violence against women at the domestic level accompanied the increase in care work. This domestic violence cannot be separated from the systemic injustice women face. This systemic injustice constitutes structural violence against women. Hidden in laws, cultures, and beliefs, which normalise the injustice, it does not have an identifiable perpetrator as it is making it appear standard and natural. The events during the pandemic have challenged and partially deconstructed the artificial divide between interpersonal or domestic violence which takes place within the private sphere or the family institution, and the structural violence which is perpetuated within the public sphere and is mainly invisible.

As across the globe, climate-induced disasters in both Zimbabwe and Malawi have increased in frequency and intensity since 2019. During the period this FPAR took place Zimbabwe was living a crisis within a crisis as it was trying to recover from the devastating effects of Cyclone Idai that left more than a thousand people dead in both Chimanimani and Chipinge. Women in Malawi were not spared by the Cyclones either, and are right now dealing with one of the [worst cyclones](#). Climate change induced vulnerabilities are heightened across all the sites in which JASS is rooted. These communities are also prone to increased and interconnected threats from the extractive industry ruthlessly excavating natural resources, deteriorating land, soil, water and common goods. In Binga, some of the same Tonga people who were relocated to make way for the Kariba dam are now being displaced to make way for the Gwayi –Shangani dam, often without having electricity at the site of relocation and no compensation for their losses.

APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

FPAR⁴ draws from JASS's decade-long grassroots feminist leadership, network building, and feminist influence strategies in the Southern Africa region to foreground new rounds of organising, political action and advocacy in both Malawi and Zimbabwe. [Feminist Popular Education \(FPE\)](#), [Feminist Movement Building \(FMB\)](#), and [power analysis](#) are at the heart of FPAR. These informed how the work was framed and conceptualised to equip women with the needed feminist politics to confront the challenges they are facing as a collective, in ways that sought to transform the structures of power in their contexts and in themselves.

FPAR is an approach and methodology that necessitates the process of using dialogic methods and methods that combine storytelling and observation to allow for conversation and reflection. Through engagements with women activists, the process is intended to enhance a critical perception of the world in which they live. The approach employed in this Study is intended to build women's voice, power, agency and leadership, putting their lived experiences and realities at the centre.

As such, the FPAR process was designed to build the collective leadership of the women involved – activating them in each step of the process to:

- Strengthen their Research and analytic skills to enable them to share and document their lived realities with violence.
- Build their political consciousness – a deeper understanding of the economic, political and social dynamics shaping their lives and context;
- Strengthen connections and solidarity across differences for joint action and more significant impact;
- Support and strengthen their civic participation to ensure that their voices are included in policy processes and contribute to broader solutions to violence; and
- Integrate safety and wellness strategies to sustain women's organising and lives.

FPAR emphasises a strong link between Research and action, implying that Research generates information and knowledge which is used to inform action and decision. Therefore, part of what was interrogated in the Endline Study was to determine whether the FPAR process involved taking actions, and whether the participants are going to take action to address the challenges they are facing in their personal lives, as well as

⁴ Participatory Action Research is based on the ideas of Paulo Freire, a radical Brazilian educator, who argued that the road to social change is through dialogue and "conscientisation" wherein marginalised people engage in critical analysis and organise action to challenge unjust and undemocratic economic, social and political systems and practices.

collectively as a community. In addition, the insights gained from reflection on action was supposed to inform our knowledge about power and how change happens leading to a new phase of enquiry/research. This is called the action reflection cycle.

As a shift away from traditional research ways of carrying out research processes, FPAR researchers have an existing relationship of solidarity with the community whom she was co-researching and co-facilitating with. The approach is based on the premise that research processes must be democratic, equitable, liberating and life enhancing. The research process in itself aims to be a liberating and transformative experience. This also means that research conducted using FPAR can be risky because one can expect resistance from dominant groups and authorities, hence the importance of creating safe spaces and safety mechanisms throughout the process.

OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Objectives:

- Develop a clear contextual analysis of multiple drivers and key structural causes of violence and vulnerability affecting women's lives including political and economic forms of violence
- Examine how structural and systemic factors interact with proximate women's vulnerability to gender based violence
- Identify key players behind the violence and possible allies who can be part of the solution
- Harvest the learning and key insights generated in multiple formats to contribute to smarter thinking and responses to gender-based violence
- Identify and initiate a set of action strategies that reduce violence and vulnerability affecting women.

Key research questions:

- What are the key structural causes and drivers of violence and vulnerability affecting women's lives?
- How are structural and systemic factors interacting with proximate situations of women's vulnerability to gender-based violence?
- Who are the key players behind the violence, and who can be allies in the solution?
- What are the connections between structural factors and direct forms of violence and how does an understanding of these connections positively transform the messaging and action around GBV?
- What are the challenges and opportunities for action and advocacy?
- How can the research findings inform smarter thinking and innovative responses to GBV?

PARTICIPANTS

A total of 48 women, 4 per each of the 6 study sites per country, participated in the FPAR Endline Study. Participating women activists included land and environment defenders, female sex workers, and LGBTIQ+ people.

Each country had an FPAR Endline meeting with the 24 women activists that were involved in the FPAR from its inception to the end. Separate meetings were held with JASS advisors, allies and partners, and other stakeholders including traditional leaders, police officers, religious leaders, lawyers, and representatives from the legal justice systems. All the people that participated in the Endline Study participated in the FPAR and were informed about the FPAR process. Since the FPAR was rooted in women's struggles for land, environmental and water justice, bodily autonomy, and respect for women's human dignity in the various site, six focus group discussions were held with the women, four in Malawi and two in Zimbabwe in the FPAR sites with an average of twelve women in each group.

Participation

One of the most important aspects of this FPAR Endline was to ensure women's full and meaningful participation in the process. For this ***process, participation was regarded as the process of harnessing the presence, energy, ideas, feelings and actions of individuals and groups around a defined activity.*** It implies that women activists participating in the Endline Study understand why it is important and useful for their lives and feel inspired to be part of this process at varying levels. Effective participation was critical to this process since FPAR was an individual as well as a collective process.

Hence, participation was a key component of the present endline study. It is the women themselves who generate the research questions and make sense of the information generated through FPAR, as part of more deeply understanding the different ways in which they are oppressed and responding to challenges in their context, and eventually determine the action/s needed to respond to the new knowledge they created.

However, it was also appreciated that some women find it difficult to participate due to lack of confidence or experience, language barriers, or power dynamics between women. To ensure meaningful and quality participation during the Study, we asked what could be the common barriers to participation in our Endline Study:

- Most women have many different responsibilities within the household giving them less time to participate in activities outside the house;

- Women often take care of young children or the elderly which limits their mobility;
- Women's male partners may feel threatened with their participation in public spaces, and prevent them from doing so;
- There are cultural traditions that have socialised women not to participate in public spaces; and
- Younger women may not feel confident to talk in front of older women, or women may not feel comfortable to talk in front of men.
- To overcome the barriers to women's participation - often markers of their powerlessness and exclusion in their families and communities - we created safe spaces to build understanding and solidarity, and undertake collective actions for change. Concrete measures taken to address the challenges in relation to participation where:
 - Organised meetings and discussions at times and in places that take the constraints that women face into account, for example, in Zimbabwe we had to renegotiate the dates as the proposed dates fell on a planting season and festive season where women in the communities were busy;
 - For women who may find it difficult to leave their homes, we found ways to reach them through community visits during the focus group discussions, particularly in Zimbabwe where we had the focus group discussion in someone's house in one of the sites;
 - Use social structures and practises creatively to have important conversations, for example, in Malawi we used church infrastructure and a community drop-in centre to meet with the FPAR participants for focus group discussions;
 - Consciously build the confidence of women to feel positive about themselves and their capacity to share valuable and unique information.

Participatory approaches and methods were used throughout the Endline data generation based on the belief of the revolutionary nature of FPAR. The participatory approach used involved collaboration of the 'outsiders' and the 'insiders' with a view to deepening a shared understanding of what the FPAR process was trying to achieve. Therefore, the activist women were fully involved in identifying the problem along with the researcher and carried out a process of fact-finding, conceptualisation, planning, implementation and evaluation to make a collective assessment and generate new knowledge at the same time.

CARE, CONSENT AND CONFIDENTIALITY

The FPAR process was informed by feminist ethics of care that were co-created by the FPAR facilitators and the activists who were co-researchers in the FPAR process. The entire process was guided by principles that ensured that the process includes consent for documenting and permission to use documented information.

The process was participatory, sensitive, safe and focused on well-being, agency, self-determination and dignity of the FPAR participants. All effort was made to ensure that the purpose and aim of the documentation is clear and the research participants were accorded confidentiality always. The documentation format was developed and designed through a consultative process with the research participants, in order to ensure that quality information was obtained in an acceptable manner and based on care and respect, while being sensitive to the wishes of the participants and facilitators. The women were given an opportunity to tell their stories on their experiences and realities without coercion or undue influence.

METHODS AND DATA GENERATION TOOLS

The FPAR that was undertaken by JASS included Feminist Popular Education (FPE) sessions and use of FPE tools in facilitation. The same tools were used during the FPAR data generation process, therefore there was a need to also evaluate whether the FPAR participants had gained the facilitation skills for them to be able to continue with the Feminist Movement Building work. The activists facilitated the Endline Study data generation with full acknowledgement that the FPAR is not neutral and the human experience of those involved in the Study, including that of the FPAR facilitators, is integral to the process and the knowledge generated. Storytelling, observation, document analysis and in-depth interviews were employed in the data generation process, and different tools were used as outlined below.

Storytelling

In this Endline research process, storytelling was used in order to bring out the women's voices and personal experiences into the process and outcomes. As a means to explore the way in which diverse women construct, perform and negotiate their gendered identities as they recall their experiences, the women were trained to use storytelling as a data generation tool during the FPAR process. Storytelling was used both as an instrument for data generation, as well as to extract lessons about what works and what may not work among the women.

"African culture is very oral.... Rich stories can't be translated into numbers but, for some, numbers substantiate stories. This is a clash of cultural contexts. When you go to the grassroots level, a woman will tell you how a toilet has changed her life. You watch her body language. Then there is the question of how to put that into a report. So much is lost in translation...but the results are there for anybody to see. This is the kind of progress to be seen in Africa. To have a woman at village level challenge a chief is unheard of, or [for her] to say if she disagrees with a president. Culture is important."⁵

In both countries, women have utilised and sculpted stories to explain shared narratives and goals. Storytelling was used to examine the extent to which dominant, patriarchal narratives are created, reproduced, or resisted through the process of recounting women's experiences. It was noted that the stories had multiple dimensions and they went beyond just providing an audience with examples and they showed what one means without

⁵ Kimberli Keith-Brown, Ángeles Cabria & Seema Shah (2013): From the Perspective of International Women's Funds.

imposing a lot of detail to express the sense of what is involved. The storytelling processes added emotions and visual details to the conversations that were held, and in that way, storytelling became a way of interpreting the women's narrative into a convincing picture to which the researcher could connect. It was concluded during the storytelling sessions in the focus group discussions and the meetings, that this tool allowed for honest, clear and natural ways of giving information. Therefore, storytelling became a crucial historical tool for understanding women's past, and the present. This gave the FPAR facilitators an opportunity to make an assessment on where the women were at before the FPAR and where they are now, and what actions they took to liberate themselves.

We have used storytelling throughout our FPAR meetings and processes because we believe it is Feminist and is a Feminist way of capturing our realities and unique experiences as women. During our FPAR ethics training, we came to understand that good storytelling is a sensitive and ethical way based on care for each other that can generate and sustain a sense of claiming back power for survivors of gender based violence, and in the case of our sisters in Chimanimani who survived the Cyclone Idai and those support us through documenting our experiences.

Focus Groups

FPAR participants in both Zimbabwe and Malawi have been using Focus Group discussions and meetings throughout the FPAR process. The focus group discussions, usually co-facilitated and used by participants to seek clarity amongst themselves on areas they did not quite understand, delivered the flexibility and the unstructured responses which depict views and feelings that are genuine. The researcher co-moderated together with the women thus directing and piloting the discussions without imposing.

During the focus group meetings, the research participants used several FPE tools to collect data and to analyse and process women's realities, including carrying out [Heart-Mind-Body Mapping](#), [Power Mapping](#), [Master's House](#). Since these tools were introduced into the FPAR process, it gave an opportunity to make an assessment of how the tools were understood, particularly among those who had not been in JASS spaces before, and if they were able to use the tools on their own. It was observed that the tools allowed the participants to analyse the data collectively as they made sense of what was coming out from the discussions.

Power Mapping and Analysis

Power mapping is a process of democratising knowledge and building a collective understanding of power dynamics, even within the FPAR process itself. It is used as a

collaborative tool where research participants could all make contributions to the visual map of power holders and power relationships in a visual representation of data which shows connections and links between locations, institutions, issues, phenomenon or even geography.

It was considered a crucial tool in this process to evaluate women's understanding of the social, economic or political connections and changes within communities or groups. This exercise was intended to strengthen and inform the research participants on who the power holders within the research process are, and set up the research participants to build their collective power. Given FPAR is an action oriented research process, power mapping assists women in identifying potential avenues to reach and influence decision makers indirectly and directly.

Power mapping exercises were carried out after defining the Endline research objectives. The FPAR participants were asking each other questions such as who is the person who has the power to make decisions that achieve our goals, and what power do we hold as individuals and as a collective. The power analysis involved a lot of discussions and conversations, and the aim was to share the knowledge in the room, but care was taken not to get stuck and/or argue about the exact placement of the players on the map, the focus was more about the positions relative to each other than the 'right' or 'wrong' placement; as well as to evaluate if the participants understood the FPE tools that were introduced to them during the FPAR process, and whether they were able to identify the targets for their individual and collective actions.

Body Mapping

Used for therapeutic, artistic and political purposes, body mapping is also a data generation tool. In contrast to the dominant research methods which neglect bodily or sensory dimensions of experience, it is uniquely suited to research projects like FPAR because of its leanings towards social justice and it involves visual stimuli and an arts-based, collaborative, reflective process, which encourages embodied awareness. The body mapping process was intended to create a space to explore experiences and perspectives that are difficult to discuss as they are often hidden or obscured, providing a means of representing social relationships and processes through body maps and first-person narratives. Body mapping was used in the Malawi focus groups, where participants were asked to trace a life-sized image of their body onto a large piece of paper and use paint or other material to decorate their body map, including putting symbols on the drawing. Body mapping facilitates participants reclaiming or creating a preferred view of the body, thus bringing into question negative assumptions inherent in dominant narratives or ways of seeing.

Observation

Observation was used by the Researcher to generate data based on the premise that all social Research involves some degree of observation. The use of observation is not a preserve for researchers using any particular methodological approach. It is believed that observation is a technique that involves systematically selecting, watching, and recording behaviours and characteristics of people, objects or phenomena. However, in this Endline data generation process, the researcher did not observe as an outsider as this would result in behaviour alterations or the women and other FPAR participants would engage in socially desirable behaviour. It is critical to note that the researcher was not insulated from the surroundings during the course of storytelling, interviewing and other processes but was observing and noting the surroundings and taking note of any data that is relevant to the Study. Photographs of observed situations during fieldwork were taken, but this was done together with the FPAR participants and after seeking consent to take the pictures. The informal conversations and interaction with the FPAR participants were recorded in the field notes. Observation was important to the Endline study process because it gives more context related information and gives an understanding of the physical, social, cultural and economic contexts in the study sites. The relationships among and between women, contexts, ideas, norms and events; and women's behaviours and activities were noted. Some of the activities and occurrences that raise questions were probed during interviews. However, observations gave the needed additional and more accurate information when it was triangulated with storytelling, document analysis and interviews. One major setback with observation is that it may raise some ethical issues arising from the need for confidentiality or privacy. However, the researcher took all necessary precautions to ensure that there is no encroachment into respondents' private spaces, by keeping to the public places and the venues were meetings and focus group discussions were held, and avoiding women's private dwellings, unless invited by the women as in the case of Zimbabwe in one of the sites, and with express consent from the concerned person(s).

In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews were used in this Endline Study to solicit rich data through oral questioning. In-depth interviews were conducted to generate data from duty bearers who include religious leaders, the police, judges, and traditional leaders. This qualitative data generation technique involved conducting intensive individual questioning to bring out an in-depth understanding of the women's experiences and get a clear picture of how women experience violence. The in-depth interviews were used for women who are in positions of power and could not be involved in the focus group discussions and Storytelling sessions.

Semi-structured questions were used during the interviewing process and an interview guide was used to guide the interview process, with flexibility for follow up questions on the responses given. During the interview process, the researcher was able to elicit information on individual experiences, opinions and feelings.

Triangulation of Data Sources

More than one data source was used to generate data for the Endline Study. Triangulation in Research is the use of more than one approach to researching a question. The aim of triangulation is to improve the confidence in the findings through validation of a proposition through making use of two or more independent measures. The combined findings from two or more approaches give a more comprehensive image of the results than either approach could have alone. The data generation instruments were triangulated. Interviews, observation, focus group discussions, storytelling and visual tools were used to collect data in order to give a comprehensive picture of the results. Triangulation in data generation was used as a way of avoiding potential biases which emanate from the use of a single data collection instrument.

THE FPAR PROCESS

The below process (see figure 1 below) was carried out in the two countries at the same time, with adaptations according to national and local context. In Zimbabwe there was a security and safety training because of the context in which the FPAR was going to take place. Some of the activists in Zimbabwe, particularly the land defenders Zimbabwe’s Marange and Odzi have been arrested for fighting against land grabbing by very powerful corporations in the diamond mining sector. Covid-19 regulations were also much harsher for FPAR participants in Zimbabwe.

It is also important to highlight that FPAR work was starting at different levels of organising and different levels of understanding FMB in both countries. In Malawi, the Our Bodies Our Lives (OBOL) movement was born out of the JASS’ political accompaniment and FMB work. The FPAR process was therefore intended to strengthen the already existing feminist political work in all the sites. In Zimbabwe, feminist organising and FPAR was new for most of the sites. The community of Odzi had engaged previously on Participatory Action Research (PAR) processes, but not from a feminist approach that acknowledges women’s marginalised position. This process took place in 2013 as to challenge land dispossession, and in 2014, the community of Odzi in Zimbabwe did another PAR that had legal empowerment as the main agenda. Also some women in Marange had participated in some ways in PAR processes, but had not gone deep into the processes that were done with other organisations. It was noted that the organisations that supported PAR in Zimbabwe are all not based in Zimbabwe.

Figure 1. FPAR process 2019–2022



ON POWER ANALYSIS AND UNDERSTANDING STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE

The FPAR participants explained power in the way that it dominates and oppresses, in the way that it is used as a resource to transform and change, in the way that it is held within individuals which gives them potential to transform other individuals, and power that is held by collectives which can be used to challenge and change societal structures.

Power was seen as central to the FPAR work. Power was considered as power-over, which is the power that dominates; secondly, power-to which is the power that gives one the ability to act and do something; then power-with which is the ability to act as part of a collectives, this is the power that is shared with others within a group or collective; and finally the power-within, which is the willpower and the determination that individuals have. Both countries showed a lot of understanding of how power works and could use various tools which include the Master's House and the Power Flower to explain power in the most powerful ways. The participants were very comfortable sharing, in the most remarkable ways, how power forms the source of their oppression.

The FPAR participants, who are all activists and WHRDs, mentioned about how 'power over' is unevenly distributed in society, and as one of the activists put it, 'authoritative power' which is conferred to a few individuals who want to maintain those uneven and unequal power structures. The participants mentioned how the systemic view of power puts emphasis on the ways in which the general historical, economic, social, political, and cultural forces make it possible for some individuals to exercise power over others. This is the kind of power that the activists from Malawi and Zimbabwe said they are challenging as it perpetuates violence against them. As a common denominator in both countries, participants said **women's struggles are all centred on shifting the existing power relations and building the women's collective power to dismantle the existing power structures.**

Power was also viewed as relational in the ways in which women, within the social contexts that they live, interact with various forms of power, and that the relations of power in society play out in the way that women live with, and negotiate their way around power. In Zimbabwe, it was noted during the data generation process how the FPAR participants assumed that the equitable distribution of power is unattainable without the redistribution of power in the policy-making and decision making bodies.

"This redistribution of power is possible so that women have the power-to participate and shape decisions affecting their lives and wellbeing." – Placidia Mawuto, Zimbabwe

The FPAR participants argued that when power is distributed evenly in society, or in a way that does not marginalise another group of people over another, then it implies that power translates into power-with.

In Malawi, participants showed more confidence in using the power analysis tool than in Zimbabwe. There seems to have been continuous use of the tool in Malawi, where the power mapping was used to take into consideration all players/actors who are relevant to this Research and identify the key players to target for action, provide an analysis and visual presentation of where power relationships stand in relation to the gender based violence, identify the relationships between key players and assess their relevance to the research problem that they had been working on, identify further information needed to further develop the power map and inform the FPAR process.

In both countries, power mapping supported the FPAR participants to take steps in confronting power holders over the issues that they raised. The police and traditional leaders seemed to be the main targets that the FPAR participants in both countries confronted. While in Malawi, the women are working well with the police and the courts, in Zimbabwe the relationship between the police was that of hostility and lack of cooperation. There is a huge divide between the activists and the law enforcement agents. However, this did not stop the women from challenging power though the issue of security kept coming up.

The power session in Malawi took quite long and some of the sessions were quite theoretical and when asked to explain the notion of invisible power one of the participants said, *“On this one we had to dig why these powers are bad by digging deep into why is it bad, so that we could put ourselves in other women’s shoes, for example, why women use herbs and chemicals to tighten their vaginas for the benefit of men, even if it makes them uncomfortable”*.

Participants Thoughts on Women and Power

- Women are not encouraged to have authoritative power; it is frowned upon by society.
- Power can be positive or negative.
- No-one is completely powerless. Everyone has some power.
- Power can come from feelings, connections, relationships, position, control over resources, knowledge, etc.
- Power plays out across gender, race, class, ethnicity, age, sexuality-privileging some excluding others. Often men are more privileged, and women are excluded
- Power is dynamic, and can change
- This is important for us as activists, so we can think about what kind of power we want to build and what kind of power we want to challenge.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Women’s Understanding of FPAR

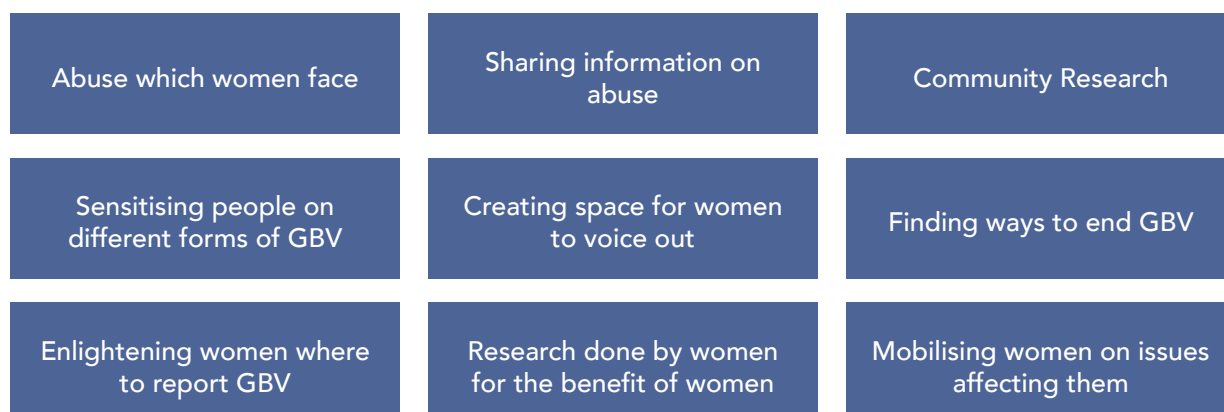
The activists had different interpretations of FPAR but all the meanings were relevant to their contexts. One of the women in Zimbabwe explained that FPAR goes beyond just research to include self organising; explaining that women make a realisation about their own situations and have to organise themselves to act; going further to explain that the action part involves making a decision, taking a step to address the status quo, shifting power, challenge those who hold power and exposing structural violence. The women in both countries had an understanding that FPAR does not necessarily need to come up with a report, but can be used for the development of toolkits, come up with strategies, take action and just inform women what they can start organising on.

“FPAR is an approach and methodology that necessitates the process to make use of dialogic methods, methods that combine storytelling, in order to allow conversation and reflection. The engagement with women activists who include land and environment defenders, the LBTIQ++ allows for a critical perception of the world in which we live” - Sibongile Singini, Malawi, JASS SNA

“FPAR does not need to end, it should be an ongoing process, as long as the struggle is there and the injustice persists, then we can say that FPAR cannot come to a conclusion because we keep going into that spiral of taking action, and reflection, then going back to the drawing board” – Myness Musaamba, Zimbabwe

The women in Zimbabwe were concerned about the FPAR process ending, and the same issue was raised by the women in Malawi who kept asking if this was the end of the work that they had been doing under FPAR. However, some of the activists were contextualising the definition that came out of the group discussion and concluded that since FPAR catalyses movement building then they cannot come to an end.

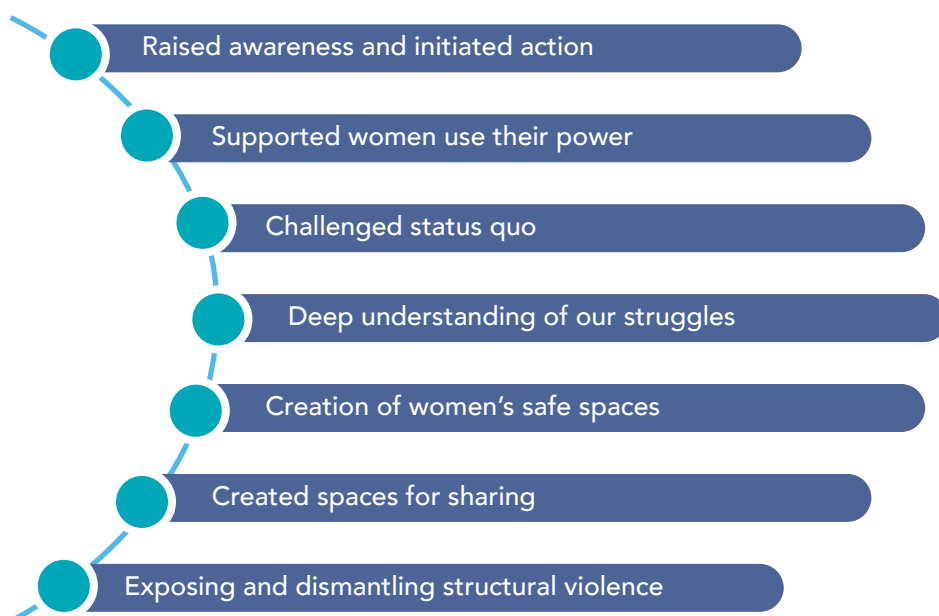
Figure 2. What comes to mind when you hear about FPAR? Participant responses



BENEFITS OF FPAR FOR WOMEN'S LIVES

One of the benefits of FPAR that was appreciated in Zimbabwe was related to building knowledge around the use and application of FPE tools such as the Master's house. The women in Malawi had already been using this tool in their FPE work and previous FPAR but in Zimbabwe the Master's House was a new tool that the women said assisted them to better understand structural violence. The participants mentioned that they now know that culture, the legal system, beliefs, norms, and religion can be forms of violence, and colonialism, racism, patriarchy and poverty are all intertwined to cause injustices and violence against women.

Figure 3. How did women activists benefit from FPAR? Participant responses



The participants build their understanding of how research participants in FPAR are not separate, neutral academics theorising about others, but are co-researchers and collaborators with the other women working together towards social justice and equality. The women mentioned that FPAR challenges the façade of neutrality implicit in male-stream Research, and therefore offers an opportunity to trouble and disrupt the boundaries and offers a chance to examine and address gender blindness. In both Malawi and Zimbabwe, there was convergence on that **FPAR is intended to emancipate, facilitate participation and collaborations** through taking on board women's experiences and knowledge for the purpose of action, and challenges the male orientation that is associated with other research processes which ignore, minimise, and marginalise women.

Contextual differences for Zimbabwe and Malawi

Though it can be said that the Zimbabwe and Malawi contexts are largely the same, there are some noticeable differences in the ways that the women organise their movement. More specifically:

1. Because security is a major concern, the women in Zimbabwe seem to avoid having structures and would rather have a space or platform. One of the activists said that if they would have a formal structure, they would a) be targeted by the state and from their past experience, some people may end up arrested or in the worse case scenario being killed; b) end up with a 'sisterarchy' in the sense that power may end up being vested in one person or few individuals. However, the women are organised in their own unique ways, and they know who to approach for support when they need it but they do not have a distinguishable leader.

The women in Zimbabwe work in very hostile contexts, fighting very powerful mining corporations with ties with the country's political and economic elite, particularly women from Chipinge, Odzi, Marange and Binga. This means the activists in Zimbabwe are very security conscious in a way that activists in Malawi are not. Security is something that they weave in the way they communicate amongst themselves, the way they communicate about the meeting, what they communicate in the meeting, they interrogate who is in the meetings, they listen to the silencing and even question why some people are not making contributions and whether they have been gagged or not, they listen to the narrative that is emerging.

2. The FPAR participants in Zimbabwe do not have expectations to get handouts or support from their government. When they talk about food gardens, they refer to their own initiatives that are supported by their own resources within their communities. In Malawi it seems the sisters have some expectations that their government would give support in terms of fertilisers and seed.

The women in Malawi have a good relationship with the police, government departments, traditional authorities and other leadership structures in their communities and countries. In Zimbabwe, the activists have a very small group of select 'good' leaders that they can trust whom most confessed to having worked with them for a number of years continuously and have always been on their side and believed in their struggle. Security is of such major concern to the activists that they do not even trust some NGOs in the country whom they think may not be working against them, but their ways of working exposes them to danger.

The women in the land defenders movement have very strong gatekeepers against monetising their struggle, and they quickly challenge anything that they feel would

compromise their struggle. *“Let us stop having these meetings in hotels because this is killing our movements. Let us have meetings in communities because that is where the people are. Hotels and per diems are destroying our work.”* – Myness Musaamba.

3. Due to differences in the way women organise in Malawi and Zimbabwe (as per the above), representation is also different. In Malawi, it seems people attending meetings and workshops have a way of rotating. In Zimbabwe, a number of activists who understand the language and can articulate the politics effectively and convincingly, have become the faces of the struggle, but in the community they do not always have much support. This seems to be one of the biggest undoings of not having a structure. Whereas in Malawi OBOL women make sure everyone has a chance to attend events and represent their circles, in Zimbabwe, some of the activists are not broadly supported by the community. This is particularly true in Marange where the struggle for demilitarisation has been ongoing for the past 16 years, in a way that is not celebrated in the communities as the people would face resistance when they go back to the community.

Progress obtained: changes at community level

The following table provides an overview of the positive changes that were brought about during the FPAR process per site, as identified by the women participating.

Malawi	
Central Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Improved relationship with stakeholders ● OBOL now independently registered and more known; people know what they are doing ● Women can now talk about violence. Instead of going door to door, now women just come straight to the OBOL hubs ● Women now in decision making positions e.g. child protection, victim support unit (VSU). ● Access to justice for rape victims i.e justice now much faster, mobilising and organising their diversities, reduced fear in women & self-reliant ● Some religious leaders & chiefs are now more aware of different expressions of GBV ● Some child sex workers went back to school, and those who were pregnant were accompanied

Southern Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● elped to build and mobilise more women in the movement ● Improved and new relationships with stakeholders ● FPAR has helped to dig deep into structural cause of violence ● Some forms of silent abuse were surfaced and can now be discussed, e.g. some husbands were inserting fingers in the vaginas of their wives to check if they had sex with other man
Northern Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Brought women together and improved self-reliance amongst women ● FPAR gave voice to women, they feel they are now better able to deal with issues of injustice and they now know where to go and what to do to report in cases of violence, including improved knowledge of the law amongst some ● More sex workers have joined the movement and have improved their livelihood
Zimbabwe	
Binga	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increased awareness that the laws of the country are repressive; they don't protect marginalised women or their interests. ● Gained historical and structural perspective of exclusion and injustice, particularly in relation to displacement ● Women managed to challenge the relocation of communities because of the construction of the Gwayi –Shangani dam, mobilising women to claim their demand to see the places where they were going to be relocated to before relocation. ● Greater awareness in the community that the dam construction will not benefit the Binga people. ● More women getting into leadership positions.
Mutare Urban	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Women now know where to report their issues when they face violence ● Increased sense of being able to stand up for themselves
Odzi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Women now have power concerning their own lives and their voices have been amplified. ● Solidarity has increased among women – they carry each other's burden.

Odzi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Child marriages have decreased, and more girls are being enrolled into schools in comparison with previous years. ● Community leaders have grown their respect for women's contribution. ● Greater understanding of structural violence at community level
Chipinge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Women are more comfortable to share cases of GBV despite obstacles. ● There are now more female leaders in the community and traditional leaders courts now have a women committee paving the way for more women leaders. ● Child preference and harmful cultural practices have decreased.
Chimanimani	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Women now have increased knowledge of their rights and can better and more freely express their opinions even in public gatherings. ● More women taking up leadership positions. ● Increased empowerment, e.g. women engaging in "mukando" (community women's savings groups). ● Gender based violence and poverty has decreased in the community. ● FPAR has supported women and their communities to overcome the trauma they faced after passing of Cyclone Idai
Marange	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Women are now able to support one another in their livelihoods and have increased knowledge of their rights. ● More women now own properties and some even have their livestock which was not so previously. ● More women are taking up leadership positions.

Remaining and ongoing challenges

When asked about current and ongoing struggles, a number of issues were raised across the research sites:

1. **Poverty** and all its dimensions, including energy poverty and water poverty (particularly mentioned in Binga, Zimbabwe)
2. **Conflict in relation to land**, including issues of land grabbing, unclear land tenure, and land injustice. Issues related to housing were also brought up in Chimanimani, Odzi and Mutare (Zimbabwe), where people are impacted by the gentrification of low cost housing areas or are forcefully relocated due to extractive projects.

3. **Environmental and climate injustice** is also a common struggle, including the unresolved Kariba Dam issue in Binga (Zimbabwe), issues of water justices (e.g. payment of bills and forced urbanisation in Odzi, Zimbabwe), and human and wildlife conflict (Binga, Zimbabwe).
4. **Sexual harassment, inequality and violence**, sustained by religious institutions and an education system that upholds inequality as well as unclear traditional leadership structures to protect everyone in the community (e.g. in Mutare early child marriages are rampant because of the presence of numerous apostolic sects, and girls in early child marriages are most often excluded from education). Marginalisation of women in churches and schools was also mentioned in Malawi sites.

Some context specific struggles were mentioned, including the Zambezi historical injustices (Binga, Zimbabwe), militarisation (Marange, Zimbabwe), and the particular challenges faced by sex workers and the LGBTQI community in Mutare, including normalisation of violence and discrimination, unclear regulations on sex work and the rights of LGBTQI people, and abuse of sex workers by armed forces particularly during Covid-19 lockdowns.

From research to action: actions taken by women during the FPAR

Zimbabwe

It seems Zimbabwe had the most unexpected outcomes in the sense that the activists who were considered to have been in the struggle for a long time did not have much to say and they had the same story they had been telling for a very long time, but in the new areas where JASS started working with, and building activism seem to have been more vibrant and practising feminism and having tangible actions. An overview per site is provided below.

As said earlier, most women in Zimbabwe were new to FPAR and FMB. As such, women expressed much appreciation with regards to the FPE tools they obtained to analyse structural violence and power (power within, power with, power to, power over), to strengthen their self-organising, community organising and mobilisation and movement building, and to create safe spaces. One woman shared she had learned how to accept differences without being judgmental.

Chimanimani

Women continued having activities, even without financial assistance to hold meetings. JASS circles in Chimanimani organised themselves differently, on their own, without assistance from the government or any organisation during Cyclone Chalane and

Cyclone Ana through a Feminist Community of Care that they created through their own efforts. Their efforts resulted in a paper that was published in the South African Journal for Economic and Social Policy, entitled, '[Climate Change Disasters: Zimbabwe's Vulnerable Communities need a Just Recovery Plan](#)'.

The FPAR participants and their community would like to take legal action against the government because of the inaction in protecting lives and their ancestral land. They have since engaged with the [Bernstein Institute for Human Rights](#), an international community of movement lawyers who work with activists providing them with support to litigate. It is noted that most lawyers in Zimbabwe are of the opinion that the climate crisis is a natural disaster that the community cannot get remedy for their losses but after learning about structural violence, the community feels that they can litigate.

The Bernstein Institute has visited this community with the assistance of the Research Consultant to do the initial mapping of what can be done. Through the FPAR work, which is the only movement work that the women have been exposed to, women from the community travelled to Ghana for a African Feminist Climate Justice Academy that is funded by the Dutch Foreign Ministry through their African Activists for Climate Justice project. Women managed to meet with other activists across Africa who are on the frontlines of the Climate Crisis. Women from other countries were very appreciative of the Feminist Circles methodologies which were introduced to the process when sisters from Chimanimani facilitated and used the Master's House to explain the violence of the climate injustice and power.

Binga

The government of Zimbabwe had proposed a U\$3.2 billion coal power plant that was going to take water from the Sengwa River which is shared between the women who were involved in this FPAR and another group of women that the women mobilised during FPAR process from Sengwa. The Research Facilitator, managed to mobilise organisations that work on Climate change and are fighting against the coal power plants who include Power Shift Africa, Natural Justice and 350.org. The government of Zimbabwe was engaged and was not kind to the idea of stopping the coal power plant and labelled the women involved 'anti-development' and having a 'regime change' agenda. However, we ended up engaging the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) about our concerns after engaging with a Chinese NGO that advised that the government of China is quite keen to be seen globally as a 'friendly' investor. So the Chinese Embassy was engaged and an invitation to attend the ICBC Annual General meeting (AGM) was extended to the Research Consultant and one woman from Binga. A presentation was done during the ICBC's AGM and they ended up withdrawing their support for the proposed coal

power plant. However, one of the activists was arrested and released after 7 days without a charge, and 2 more were arrested and detained for 3 days without a charge.

Urgent Action Fund Africa was engaged to support the women develop their community security strategy. The people of Binga continue to talk about the injustice that was done to them when the Kariba mega hydropower plant was constructed and during this FPAR the women indicated that they now know that there are some people that understand their struggle for energy justice as they feel that they have paid for the cost of having all urban areas be electrified but they continue to live in energy poverty. From the discussion that we had in the feminist circles, a paper was written on energy sovereignty based on their conceptualisations of what kind of energy system is considered fair, published by the South African Journal on Economic and Social Policy. The paper entitled, '[Grassroots Women and Energy Sovereignty](#)', came out of the discussions with the women of Binga who felt that women need to have control over the energy systems in their communities.

Odzi

The women of Odzi did a protest against the government for forcing them to urbanise against their will. The police barricaded the roads and dispersed the women with violence. The women have been engaging with the District Administrator who told them that they need to pay for the use of the water and their argument is that they used to use community boreholes before their land was taken. The community of Odzi has also invited the Bernstein Institute for Human Rights that has worked with them before, to litigate on their behalf for water justice. The Bernstein Institute for Human Rights has agreed to support the women in Odzi to document their stories about their struggle for land and water justice.

Marange

Together with the chiefs they engaged the mining companies with their grievances of polluted water, harassment, lack of jobs and the alarming increase of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) but instead we were arrested as violating restriction rules.

Chipinge

Women wrote a petition to the minister of lands over the land grabbed by Green Fuel.

Mutare

The majority of women in the Mutare Circle are sex workers, and it is noted how society continues to have negative attitudes towards the sex workers, including even in NGO spaces. The circle approached the police's Victim Friendly Unit to establish a

relationship so that women would not be harassed, but there has been no change. In a particular case, a sex worker's house was set on fire by his boyfriend, but the police were reluctant to act even though they were approached. The Musasa organisation was also approached to provide shelter, but it was not fruitful.

Women engaged the Zimbabwean Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR) through the residents' trust over the fencing of their houses by the City Council with the intention of modernising them. The town clerk was approached as well in a demonstration but he was actually annoyed why residents had engaged lawyers.

Malawi

In Malawi, women expressed to have obtained many lessons, tools, skills and learnings from the FPAR process, including:

- Increased self-esteem, confidence and ability to speak out and represent others
- Improved collective ways of working
- New skills in areas of research, facilitation, counselling and communication, including improving their communication between stakeholders OBOL women activists
- Increased practical skills including on manure making, how to do business and on economic empowerment
- Increased analytical abilities and deeper understanding of the root causes of poverty and injustice, including a decolonial approach to human rights
- Increased ability to solve problems and to make informed decisions

The main action that the women from Malawi shared was how they had managed to register the OBOL movement, a milestone that was reached in part due to the FPAR process according to the women. A Board was put in place to manage the affairs of OBOL and the Board is the decision-making arm of the movement. There is an executive committee that consists of individuals representing their districts which is considered as the District Coordination Committee. The structures run through to the local level where the movement is organised into "hubs". This kind of structuring seems to work for the women in Malawi as they seem to work well together in a structured way.

During this Endline Study, they had meetings with the Judges, the Police, the traditional leaders (some of whom are women), one of the Ombudsman who is part of the OBOL movement and is in the Board of OBOL. There seems to be understanding of the work of OBOL amongst most of the leaders in the community but in one of the meetings, it was surprising to realise that some of the police officers that attended did not understand the issues of sexual consent and the age limits when it comes to what is considered statutory rape, and the Research Facilitator had to continue questioning

the definitions by the police officer that the Officer-in-charge ended up correcting the police officer with regards to what constitutes the age at which a person can consent to sexual relations. It was interesting to note that this misinterpretation was largely accepted in the community or the women feared confronting the police officer.

A lot of work has been done through the hubs throughout the FPAR process which include supporting other women get justice when they face gender based violence, accompanying women who are going to report cases of abuse, supporting each other access antiretroviral therapy amongst the women, working with the victim-friendly facilities in dealing with cases of rape and abuse amongst the girls. The OBOL movement is doing a lot of work on addressing women's sexual and reproductive health rights. One of the issues that the women are getting into are climate justice and land justice. An example of this is the campaign started by OBOL women against the use of synthetic fertilisers and genetically modified foods which are encroaching into their markets. The women have started making their own organic fertilisers that they are using in their food gardens. The participants mentioned that most of their members are food producers and who are now being affected by the climate crisis in a more severe way that they need to start organising on the issue of seeds, food justice, land justice and continue as well to organise on sexual and reproductive health rights.

Learning products generated as a result of FPAR process

In terms of writing work, three articles were written in the course of this FPAR, entitled:

1. Climate Change Disasters: Zimbabwe's Vulnerable Communities need a Just Recovery Plan
2. Grassroots Women and Energy Sovereignty
3. Ecofeminist Popular Education

The writing work included a short paper, '*Ecofeminist Popular Education*', which is based on the women's struggles for climate justice and the use of FPE as a tool for building knowledge and movement building.

The following were written and have to be either published and/or developed into toolkits for the women in the communities to be able to use:

1. Structural Violence and FPAR (this is recommended for a Journal Paper)
2. Feminist Ethics of Care (this should be developed into a toolkit for use by the activists in the communities)
3. Security Strategy (this should also be developed into a toolkit that can be used by the women in the communities for their organising work)

WHAT FOLLOWS: ISSUES TO CONTINUE BUILDING AND ORGANISING ON

Unmet expectations and pending issues: Zimbabwe

FPAR participants also discussed what they considered as unmet expectations and they stated that they expected the FPAR should have continued for a longer time because they were in the process of learning and unlearning, and before they could confront the power structures in their communities, the FPAR is now coming to an end. The women in Chimanimani mentioned that it was difficult for them still to let go of what happened to them because the events keep playing out in their minds and they expected to have healed during FPAR, but the pain will not go away. One of the women said that the good part though is that they can now talk about it. Most of the participants however, indicated that it was difficult for them to say what exactly was not met by the FPAR because it was a new methodology and tool that was introduced to them and it brought them a lot of excitement and hope. Most of the participants, however, said they did not feel safe and supported in facing security issues that arose during the FPAR implementation. It is however, noted that most of the fears that the women had were largely because of the impending elections, and because they felt the process of FPAR exposed them to violence as they were asking questions and challenging some of the government decisions, they feel they will be targeted during the election campaign. The women mentioned that their struggles are not well understood by the existing human rights lawyers and women's lawyers associations in the country.

“When we say that we do not want the proposed coal fired power plant in Sengwa because it pollutes, it takes away our land and causes irreversible environmental harm to my community, the dominant narrative presents coal as a source of energy. Given the current electricity shortages and power cuts in the country, most human rights lawyers and some activists feel that we are the ones who are supposed to sacrifice our bodies and our lands for the whole country. So we are attacked on all sides and our activist journey is mostly very lonely. During elections when the politicians are promising development, those development projects are hinged on taking away our lands and our territories, and we resist and fight for our lands. When we do that, politicians from all political parties think we are anti-development and this often results in a lot of violence as they all want to shut us down.” – Timu Timu, Binga

Unmet expectations and pending issues: Malawi

Unmet expectations had to do with the fact that women leading the FPAR processes were not able to go to all the areas they had hoped to as some areas are hard to reach, recognising there is a need for FMB trainings in geographically marginalised areas.

FPAR has opened up ideas on how to improve strategies and new areas of activism women would like to engage on, including: carrying out campaigns on harmful cultural practices that affect women and girls for example the issue of labia elongation and virginity testing; supporting sex workers to set up small scale businesses, increase activists understanding of how to handle girl child marriages including strategies to engage directly with these girls and not only the parents; need to better understand the law and grow activists' legal empowerment, possibly through a legal resource pack for their communities to better understand their rights using accessible language.

As a pending issue and looking towards the future, women would like to set up more feminist circles to be able to share the knowledge received during the FPAR; increase their engagement with faith leaders and community leaders to improve their understanding and support for OBOL; and meet with the government officials to share the research findings and map the way forward.

Participants' recommendations

The women in Zimbabwe and Malawi all questioned about what happened with the subregional movement that they were dreaming about when they convened during the collective data analysis process. The women all raised questions of when all the FPAR sites are going to be together and talk about their common struggles of land, environmental and climate justice, food and seed sovereignty, Sexual Reproductive Health Rights, Legal Empowerment and Development Justice.

During the evaluations two common points were noted in relation to the future of these common struggles:

1. The need for continued deep political work and feminist political education to understand the politics around land and climate justice in both countries.
2. The need to politicise the discussion and shape narratives around SRHR instead of focusing on service provision only.

The FPAR work has laid the foundations for political organising work which now needs to take shape. All women agree that FPAR should continue being used as a tool and approach for feminist movement building and women's organising, and this should lead to the development of a campaign strategy that is driven by the women.

The work that the Bernstein Institute would like to support the women to document could be accompanied by JASS, so that the feminist politics remain strong and speak to the core values that were weaved into the FPAR. The legal empowerment spaces that the FPAR participants are requesting for can be done differently through working with movement lawyers such as Natural Justice which some of the community members such as the Odzi community has worked with before to build a Bio-cultural Community Protocol to define the community's claims over their lands and territories.

The FPAR process took place as women were dealing with the devastating effects of Cyclones that left thousands dead across Zimbabwe and Malawi. Over the years these events have become more frequent and more intense, resulting in women seeking to understand what climate change really is, and asking whether things could be done differently to avert the climate disasters. Climate change narratives have largely been shaped by neoliberal thinking that recommends the climate crisis to be addressed by market based solutions that put profit over people. This creates an opportune time for organisations such as JASS to shape the feminist narratives on the climate crisis and work with the activists to link the climate crisis to GBV, conflict and other social ills that have become more intense across the region. Gender based violence has been on the rise in climate disaster prone areas, therefore the need to create narratives that are informed by women's lived realities with the climate crisis.

