

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS MADE BY CIVILIANS  
DURING NAMIBIA'S LIBERATION: A CASE STUDY OF SELECTED WAR  
NARRATIVES FROM OSHITUDHA IN OMUSATI REGION, NAMIBIA

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## **Abstract**

Civilians from the Oshitudha village, in Omusati region, made immense contributions during the war for Namibia's independence from apartheid South Africa's rule of Namibia. The objectives of this study were to examine the role played by selected civilians in Oshitudha village by supporting members of the Peoples Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN), who fought against apartheid South African forces in Namibia. A number of Oshitudha residents who witnessed the effect of war on Oshitudha civilians were interviewed. Their collective testimonies disclosed an amicable social and political interaction between the local population and PLAN combatants. Interviewees' accounts also collaborated the mainstream local narratives regarding numerous atrocities that PLAN collaborators incurred in the hands of the South African Security Forces (SASF) in Namibia. The findings of the study established that many Oshitudha civilians supported PLAN combatants with food, water, civilian clothes, transport, medicine, shelter, and intelligence information about the SASF. The study also revealed that exile-bound civilians who, in most cases, came from western Owamboland were regularly accommodated by residents of Oshitudha village for weeks as they awaited the arrival of PLAN combatants to escort them to Angola. In efforts to stop civilians support for PLAN, the SASF unleashed terror on Oshitudha civilians, which resulted in loss of lives, disappearance, permanent injuries, and loss of properties. Nevertheless, the presence of PLAN combatants who were from Oshitudha solidified the support of Oshitudha civilians, who treated them as one would treat his or her biological children. The study concludes that the assistance that Oshitudha civilians gave PLAN combatants was vital for the continuation of the Namibian armed liberation struggle. Lastly, it recommends further areas of research,

such as the official recognition of civilians who contributed immensely to the Namibian armed liberation struggle, as war veterans.

Keywords: Liberation Struggle, Civilians and War, SWAPO, Apartheid, PLAN Combatants, Oshitudha Village

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## List of Abreviation and Acronyms

AG	Attorney General
UN	United Nations
ICJ	International Court of Justice
IPC	Independent Patriots for Change
SAP	South African Police
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commision
CDM	Consolidated Diamond Mines
SWAPO	South West Africa People's Organisation
PLAN	People's Liberation Army of Namibia
SASF	South African Security Forces
UREC	University of Namibia Research Ethics Committee
MPLA	Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola / Movimento Popular de Libertacao de Angola
SADF	South African Defence Force
SADC	Southern African Development Community
FRELIMO Front	Frente de Libertação de Moçambique, / Mozambique Liberation

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## Dedication

This study is dedicated to the brave civilians of Oshitudha village, dead and alive. You are the unsung heroes of the Namibian liberation struggle, the courageous individuals who stood up against the deadly SASF and assisted PLAN soldiers when it was deadly to do so. Your unwavering determination in the face of oppression laid the foundation for a new and better Namibia. Today, as we celebrate our freedom, we remember your bravery and dedication. Your courage and strength will continue to inspire generations to come. This study is also dedicated to the late John ya Palangi who passed away in 2021. Lastly, the study is dedicated to my daughter Linda Mpollo Iiyambo and my son Dhimbulukweni Twiigwana Iiyambo.

## Declaration

I, Iiyambo Gabriel Iithembu, hereby declare that this study is my own work and is a true reflection of my research, and that this work, or any part thereof has not been submitted for a degree at any other institution.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### Background of the study

Oshitudha village, the focus of this study, is located in Outapi constituency of Omusati region, one of the fourteen political regions in Namibia. Geographically, Oshitudha is located north of the Omusati region, and it falls under the Uukwaludhi traditional authority. According to my interview with Rautia Ndilinawa (2020), Oshitudha accommodated a large number of residents before that number declined following the start of Namibia's armed liberation struggle in 1966. Ndeshitila Shinayene Kasuuka (2020) estimated that the population of Oshitudha was between one and two thousand people in 1970. However, the war of Namibia liberation struggle drastically reduced the population of Oshitudha to approximately four thousand residents. Oshitudha village, like any other villages in north central Namibia constitutes scattered households, each with a piece of land for subsistence farming. Each of these households also keep domestic animals such as cattle, goats, donkeys, and chickens (Herman Tonjes, 1996). This sort of economic organisation enabled some Oshitudha villagers to feed PLAN combatants who were operating in the Oshitudha village from their training bases in southern Angola and south western Zambia.

Oswin Namakalu (2004) explains that as far back as 1962, the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) leadership had already decided to establish a military wing. Thus the establishment of the South West Africa Liberation Army (SWALA) in Tanzania on 17 June 1964. On 4 March 1965, according to Sam Nujoma (2001), the first combatants of SWALA, known as Group One (G1), were sent from Kongwa in Tanzania to Namibia to carry out intensive political mobilisation campaigns and military training among the masses. The group was led by John Otto Nankudhu and

consisted of Simeon Lineekela Shixungileni, Patrick Israel Iiyambo, Messah Victory Nauandi, James Hamukuaja Angula and Nelson Kavela. G1 was successively followed by three other groups, G2, G3 and G4 of SWALA guerrillas from Tanzania before the first combat encounter between SWALA combatants and members of the South African Security Forces (SASF) on 26 August 1966 at Ongulumbashe in north western Namibia.

Helao Shityuwete (1990) mentioned that in early February 1966, SWAPO's top leadership came to inform him and others at Kongwa military camp that his group, G2, would follow G1, which was already operating within Namibia. G2 consisted of Castro Awala, Lazarus Haidula Zachariah, Helao Shityuwete, Elia Ndume, Julius Shilongo, Eino Kamati Ekandyo, Jonas Shimweefeleni, Festus Nehare, Nghidipo Jessaja Haufiku and David Hamunime.

The independence of Angola from the Portuguese colonial rule on 11 November, 1975 was an advantage to SWAPO and its military operations inside Namibia. Sam Nujoma (2001) explains that the "independence of Angola meant that members of SWALA, which was renamed the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN), [following SWAPO's consultative congress held at Tanga, from 26 December 1969 to 2 January 1970], could at last make a direct attack on South African forces across our northern frontiers and send in our forces and weapons on a large scale". Moreover, Susan Brown (1995) explains that Angola's independence granted PLAN access across the common border with southern Angola into Owamboland [north central Namibia], which was home to SWAPO's primary base of support.

According to my interview with Simon Kanyala (2020), PLAN insurgents first arrived in Oshitudha village in 1974. Some Oshitudha villagers welcomed them and started

providing them with food and clothes. Even though many PLAN combatants were strangers in the village, those who received them treated them in a hospitable way. Hermann Tonjes (1996) explains that apart from being extremely polite, the inhabitants of Ovamboland are known to show their guests all the hospitality possible with whatever means are at their disposal; they are always offering help, even to people who visit their homesteads for the first time.

Simon Kanyala (2020) also stated that the first group of PLAN combatants to come to Oshitudha village included Fillemon ya Kaningwalenga and Mulenga Iikuyu whose presence in Oshitudha cemented their support for PLAN combatants. Because these two combatants hailed from the Oshitudha village. Therefore, they were able to persuade the local population to support the Namibian armed liberation struggle under the leadership of SWAPO. As a result, Oshitudha residents, generally, welcomed and accommodated PLAN combatants in the village. They cooked for them, sheltered them and fed them with intelligence information about the enemy.

According to Peter Stiff (2004), in 1979, South African security forces realised that something had to be done about SWAPO's presence in Owamboland. Thus, in addition to the SADF, two more security forces were created in South West Africa (SWA), modern day Namibia. These were the South West Africa Territorial Force (SWATF), created in August 1977 and Koevoet (named after the Afrikaans word for crowbar), which came into force in January 1979. These counter-insurgency units brought an end to the free movement of PLAN combatants in Owamboland and perpetrated untold suffering on civilians. Vilho Shigwedha (2018) explains that despite committing countless wilful killings of civilians, there had not been prosecution of Koevoet for the crimes they committed. Susan Brown (1995) points out that in 1974, as many as three thousand young people left Namibia by year-end. Many of them decided to flee the

country for fear of their lives. This instance was similar to that of Oshitudha village, where many young people left the village for exile but not many of them returned as PLAN fighters during the war. Furthermore, people from Oshitudha joined colonial security forces such as SWATF and Koevoet.

The researcher grew up listening to the oral history of Namibia's liberation struggle narrated to him by his guardians. Narratives of how PLAN combatants fought with the South African Security Forces, such as Koevoet and SWATF, and the involvement of civilians in the armed struggle inspired this study. Furthermore, Zimbabwe's liberation struggle from 1964-1979 also drew aspirations for this study. Peter Stiff (2004) argues that the notorious paramilitary counter-insurgency unit Koevoet was modeled on Rhodesia's (Zimbabwe) Selous Scouts, a counter-insurgency military force during Zimbabwe's liberation war. Furthermore, according to Norma Kriger (1988), Zimbabwe's peasants formed intra-societal bonds with the country's freedom fighters and actively engaged in the country's liberation struggle. He contends that successful freedom fighters mobilization resulted in the development of ZANU-PF support committees, which were in charge of giving the guerrillas supplies including food, clothing, cash, and intelligence. In addition, the peasants participated in the conflict by aiding the freedom fighters in their attacks against the civil administration and the white farmer's operations in addition to offering food, shelter, and intelligence.

Nathaniel Chimhete (2019) recognizes that the Zimbabwe liberation struggle come to a burden to civilian population in the war zone. Focusing on Gudyanga, Melsetter District, Zimbabwe, Nathaniel Chimhete claimed that civilians in this area developed a joke "*Pasi nemakomoredzi—ii!*" (meaning down with comrades! In Shona language). This was part of a popular joke (sometimes told in the presence of the ZANLA guerrilla fighters themselves) in Gudyanga, Melsetter District, and

Zimbabwe. Guerrilla fighters (commonly called comrades by local civilians) were always demanding that villagers slaughter chickens for them to the extent that the livestock populations declined precipitously during the second half of the 1970s. Therefore, the liberation struggle narratives from Zimbabwe are helpful enough to representing narratives of civilian support to PLAN combatants in Oshitudha village.

## Statement of the problem

Many Namibians experienced untold human suffering during Apartheid South African colonial rule of Namibia. The experiences of racial segregation, disposition of land, relocation of communities, imprisonment, torture, murder, and disappearance of innocent people were commonplace for many Namibians who lived in the war zones. Unfortunately, the history of liberating Namibia from colonialism and apartheid is poorly documented (Office of the Vice President, Republic of Namibia p. 3, 2018). Charles Namoloh, a former minister of the Namibian Defence Force (2005 to 2012), stressed that Namibia risks losing its exceptional history unless Namibians start documenting and recording the history of their liberation struggle. In this instance, people who witnessed the war for the liberation of Namibia in Oshitudha village have not recorded their experience of violence on individual lives or the community at large. Their narratives of war, suffering, loss of lives and property thrive only in localised oral history and tales of the Oshitudha village.

According to Charles Namoloh (2011), there is a need for local historians to contribute to the history of the Namibian liberation struggle. In some instances, where the liberation struggle is documented, the contribution of civilians in the war zones is left

out. Much attention is given to SWAPO activities in exile during the liberation struggle, neglecting what was happening inside the country. For example, Oswin Namakalu's (2004) book on PLAN combat operations inside Namibia did not acknowledge that it was due to civilians' support that PLAN fighters were able to execute their operations successfully. This exclusion indicates that although the history of the liberation struggle is public knowledge, there are many aspects of it that have been left out and have never been told, especially from the grassroots perspective.

Hifikepunye Pohamba, former president of Namibia, noted that civilians who stayed in western Owamboland fought well because they did all the things that helped PLAN combatants (Pohamba, circa 2002). Peter Ekandjo (2011), a former PLAN combatant, emphasizes that had it not been for the selfless sacrifices of civilians, PLAN fighters would have found it difficult to operate inside Namibia. Yet, the contribution of civilians in villages such as Oshitudha is rarely narrated in the historiography of Namibia's liberation struggle.

## Research objectives

This study was guided by the following research objectives:

- 1' Examine how Oshitudha civilians contributed to Namibia's armed liberation struggle and the types of contributions they made.
2. Analyse the social and political interaction between the local population and PLAN combatants.
3. Document some of the suffering that civilians in Oshitudha experienced during the Namibian armed liberation struggle.

## Significance of the study

It is envisaged that this study might raise public awareness about the contributions that civilians in Oshitudha made during the Namibian armed liberation struggle. Similarly, the study might inspire other researchers to conduct similar studies at other places in northern Namibia where civilians also contributed immensely to Namibia's liberation struggle, yet their contributions have gone unnoticed following Namibia's independence.

## Limitation of the study

The study was limited to Oshitudha village only. Therefore, the findings were not generalised to other villages in the Omusati region and Uukwaluudhi kingdom in particular. In addition, the Covid-19 pandemic affected the study in various ways. In particular, the national shutdown to contain the further spread of Covid-19 delayed the commencement of my field work for three months.

## Delimitation of the study

The study only gathered data from a few civilians who provided support to PLAN combatants who operated in Oshitudha village between 1974 and 1990. Moreover, the focus of this study did not extend to villages adjacent to Oshitudha village, such as Onaholongo, Ondukuta, Iilyateko, etc.

## Summary

This chapter provided background information about the study and explained the different roles that civilian populations in Oshitudha played during Namibia's liberation struggle. Moreover, the chapter explained the existing gaps in the historiography of the armed liberation struggle in Namibia. Furthermore, the chapter outlined the objectives of the study and explained the problems that necessitated the need for this study to be conducted. Moreover, the chapter provided clarification in terms of the significance of the study, its limitations and delimitations.

The next chapter explores selected literature that are relevant to my research topic.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction

This chapter discusses the literature which the researcher perceives relevant to the contributions that the Oshitudha villagers made to Namibia's liberation struggle. The first part of the chapter discusses the types of contribution that civilians made to the armed liberation struggle inside Namibia. The second part addresses the sufferings that the local population endured during Namibia's liberation struggle. The third part examines the socio-political relations between the local population and PLAN combatants. The last part of this chapter focuses on why oral interview accounts were central to the gathering of the research data and subsequently to the findings, discussions and analysis of the study.

### Civilians' contribution to the liberation struggle

Namibia's armed liberation struggle was necessitated by what Sam Nujoma (2001) termed a mockery of justice in The Hague Court. This is when the International Court of Justice (ICJ) failed to declare apartheid South Africa occupation of Namibia illegal in 1966. David Soggot (1986) states that the ICJ ruling produced one serious irreversible consequence because it favoured apartheid South Africa's illegal occupation of Namibia. This favour affirmed SWAPO's disillusionment with the international community. Similarly, the ICJ ruling asserted SWAPO's nagging belief in the necessity of armed struggle.

According to Paul Els (2007), in March 1966, six trained SWAPO guerrillas infiltrated Owamboland, north-central Namibia. The guerrillas penetrated north-central Namibia through Mbukushu district in North West Namibia. Sam Nujoma (2001)

pointed out that SWAPO guerrillas left their military base at Kongwa, Tanzania on March 4, 1965. They travelled to Zambia, then at great risk crossed the southern Zambian border into Katima Mulilo, South West Africa. They then traveled back into Zambia to cross the Cuando River into Angola and made their way into the northwest corner of South West Africa. Their aim of infiltrating north-central Namibia was to train more people as guerrilla fighters, Peter Katjavivi (1988).

The South African Police (SAP) attack on the SWAPO guerrilla camp at Ongulumbashe on 26 August, 1966, commenced Namibia's armed liberation struggle for independence. Ellen Namhila's *Tears of Courage: Five Women Mothers, Five Stories, One Victory* (2009) is an account of five women from northern Namibia who share their stories of participating in the struggle against apartheid colonialism in Namibia. They cooked meals for PLAN combatants, nursed their wounds, provided a shield, and hid their weapons. Namhila (2009) asserts that the types of assistance that these women offered to SWAPO guerrillas were part of their cultural responsibility as women, mothers, and sisters.

Similarly, these women believed it was their legitimate role to aid the struggle for freedom and independence of Namibia. Namhila's work, however, focused only on the role played by Namibian women in the early years of the Namibian armed liberation struggle. Thus, she did not concentrate on the contributions made by these women to Namibia's liberation struggle from 1980 to 1990. This period was the height of Namibia's armed liberation struggle which Namhila's work did not cover.

Furthermore, Namhila's work is limited to the role played by five women only during the Namibian armed liberation struggle. Similarly, participants in Namhila's publication are related to icons of Namibia's armed liberation struggle. Priskila

Tuhadeleni is the widow of Namibia's historical legend and a national hero, Eliaser Tuhadeleni, alias Kaxumba kaNdola. Drothea Nikodemus is the biological sister of the late Immanuel Shifindi, a liberation struggle stalwart. Lahja Iiyambo is a sister of Patrick Iiyambo, alias Lunganda, who was a PLAN staunch fighter and an icon of the Namibian armed liberation struggle. Aili Andreas Iitula is a sister-in-law of Lahja Iiyambo. Justine Amwaalwa was arrested with her husband, Jonannes Amwaalwa, for harbouring Immanuel Shifindi (Namhila, 2009). It seems Namhila focused on these women because of their links to iconic SWAPO figures but not in their personal capacity as civilians who aided SWAPO guerrillas. Furthermore, although Namhila's (2009) work is relevant to this study, the five women whom she interviewed are not from the Oshitudha village.

Peter Ekandjo's autobiography, *The Jungle Fighter* (2011), is of great importance to this study. He indicated that PLAN combatants relied on local civilian populations for food, water and intelligence information about the movement of enemy troops. He also acknowledged that if it were not for the selfless sacrifices that civilians made towards the fight against the colonial forces, PLAN fighters would have found it extremely difficult to operate inside Namibia. This claim suggests that without the local population's support for PLAN combatants, SWAPO's armed liberation struggle could have been a total failure. Unfortunately, Ekandjo did not interview local civilians who helped him during the war. Instead, he wrote his book from his own experience as a PLAN combatant. Thus, his book lacks different voices of civilians who assisted PLAN combatants during the armed liberation struggle.

Sam Nujoma's *Where Others Wavered* (2001) focused on Namibia's liberation struggle, which his autobiography classified into three fronts: political, diplomatic, and armed struggle. Although Nujoma did acknowledge the role played by civilians inside

the country in the fight against apartheid, he focused more on the exile history of the Namibian liberation struggle. Thus, Du Pisani (2007) argues that *Where Others Wavered* perpetuates one of the core myths of the liberation struggle, namely the external leadership of SWAPO almost single-handedly sustained the struggle for Namibia's independence. This narrative is one of the fault lines in the historiography of the Namibian war for independence.

The fault lines of the postcolonial narratives that Du Pisani (2007) alluded to are visible in Oswin Namakalu's (2004) *Armed Liberation Struggle: Some Accounts of PLAN's Combat Operations*. In this publication, Namakalu chronicled battles between PLAN and South African military forces in the war zone. This includes battles such as Efitu, Omakutu, Epinga, Ondombe and the Etoto raid. However, he omitted the contributions of civilians who made these attacks possible. Lovisa Nampala (2015) indicated that before PLAN fighters could attack a South African military base, they concealed themselves in local homesteads that were close to the target of their mission.

The SADC Hashim Mbita Project (2014), a nine volume publications shed light on Southern African Liberation Struggle from 1960 -1994. The first volumes focus on the eleven mainland SADC countries .These are in turn divided into three groups : Countries of the liberation (Angola ,Mozambique, Namibia, South Africaand Zimbwambwe), the frontline states (Botswana, Tanzania and Zambia), and the extension countries (Lesotho ,Malawi and Swaziland). However the last section focuses onselect countries and international organizations outside mainland SADC that were sympathetic to and supported the liberation movements in various ways. The regions are Anglophone West Africa, Francophone Africa, North Africa, Canada and the United States, China and East Asia, Cuba and the Carribbean, the German Democratic Republic (GDR), Nordic countries, the Soviet Union, and Western

Europe. The international organizations included in the study are the Commonwealth, Non-Aligned Movement, Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and the United Nations (UN). Thus, this project did not give much attention to the contributions of civilians and contributions that they made to the armed struggle in SADC countries. Furthermore, the chapters looked at contributions of countries to the liberation struggle and from 1960s to 1994. The inclusion of how Angolans, for example assisted South African, Namibian and Zimbabwe freedom fighters could have made a difference. Volume two of The SADC Hashim Mbita Project focuses on Angola entirely and is authored by Artur da Silva Julio, Eduardo Ruas de Jesus Manuel and Rosa Da Cruz E Silva. This volume presented a significant on the *history of the Southern Africa war of liberation: the case of Angola, 1949-1992*. These authors did an incredible job which made their work relevant to this study. They looked at the colonial society from 1940-1961, the formation of political parties in Angola, the armed struggle for national liberation, the generalization of armed struggle, the decolonization of Angola and the transition to independence from 1974-1975. Most importantly, these authors have acknowledged the contributions that Angolan civilians made to Angola's armed struggle. They gave an example of January 4<sup>th</sup> uprising in Baixa de Kassanje, Angola. In December 1960, the first signs of resistance to the exploitation of the peasants of Baixa de Kassanje appeared. Faced with the absolutely inhumane conditions imposed on them to produce cotton for the Cotton Company (COTONANG), they refused to show up at their jobs or pay taxes. This gesture was in fact a direct challenge to the colonial authority, Artur da Silva Julio, Eduardo Ruas de Jesus Manuel and Rosa Da Cruz E Silva (2014). The independence of Congo in 1960 also contributed to greater awareness and mobilisation of communities in neighboring Angola. Thus, in the face of the situation imposed on them, the rural communities, victims of the cruellest

oppression, rehearsed combative actions that were to be taken against colonialist Baixa. Shops were attacked by peasants, Artur da Silva Julio, Eduardo Ruas de Jesus Manuel and Rosa Da Cruz E Silva (2014). Moreover, the Museu do Aljube (2021) further credited the Angolan peasants for commencing Angola's armed struggle by arguing that on "January 4, 1961, in the cotton fields of Baixa do Cassange, Malanje province, the peasants at the service of Cotonang (Companhia do Algodão de Angola) refuse to work and burn the seeds supplied by the cotton company. Thus, the revolt, with the assaults on the jails of Luanda and the death in the North of Angola, opened an explosion of hatred and violence and marked the beginning of the end of portuguese colonialism" in Angola. Joel das Neves Tembe and Alda Romao Saute Saide (2014) chapters looked at Mozambique and the liberation struggle in Southern Africa, 1960-1994. These authors looked at the emergence of FRELIMO (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique, or Mozambique Liberation Front), the liberation struggle of Mozambique, path to independence of Mozambique, women and the liberation struggle of Mozambique and FRELIMO and regional solidarity. These themes are important to this study. Joel das Neves Tembe & Alda Romao Saute Saide asserts that the armed struggle in Mozambique was launched on 25 September 1964. Far from the strategy of attacking the Portuguese forces and running away, FRELIMO organized a full-scale people's war against the Portuguese armed forces. The FRELIMO Central Comettee instructed its guerrillas to forces to mount operations in various parts of the country simultaneously. Thus, the armed struggle was launched in four provinces, namely Niassa, Cabo Delgado, Zambezia and Tete. The provinces of Niassa and Cabo Delgado, just like northern Namibia was to PLAN combatants, benefited from better facilities for persuing guerrilla tactics. This was due to the clandestine mobilization activities carried out before the war, the dense forest s of the provinces, ideal for

soldiers to hide in, the relatively smaller presence of colonial administration and the secure rearguard in neighboring countries Joel das Neves Tembe & Alda Romao Saute Saide (2014).

## Warzone and civilians

Vilho Shigwedha's (2018) "The missing are not dead yet: Efraim Kamati Kapolo and the impossibility of Disappearing without a trace", posited that state-sponsored mass violence and tyranny against civilians in the war zone increased when the Internal Security Act (Act 74 of 1982) was passed by the apartheid parliament in South Africa. This Act formalised the repression of local populations and empowered South Africa's so-called security forces and police to act with impunity against persons suspected of endangering the safety and security of the apartheid state.

Arn Durand (2011) argued in *Zulu Zulu Golf: Life and Death with Koevoet* that since Aawambo supported SWAPO, they deserved all the pains that Koevoet inflicted on them. Torture, assault, intimidation, beating, running over homesteads, flattening mahangu fences, destroying mahangu crops and killing the locals (*plaaslike bevolking*) in the crossfire were necessary. They supported PLAN combatants, therefore, they must suffer. However, Durand (2011) writes from his individual experience of the war as a South African soldier but not from the experience of civilians in the former warzone. He also failed to explain why civilians were feeding PLAN combatants, despite the fact that this was one of the reasons why Koevoet terrorized the local populace in the warzone.

David Soggot's (1986) *Namibia: The Violent Heritage* discussed violence that was unleashed by the South African Police (SAP) on civilians. He highlighted that when the SAP attacked SWAPO's guerrilla camp at Ongulumbashe, the police embarked on

a violent crackdown on SWAPO leaders and civilians who assisted them. He further alluded to the flogging of suspected SWAPO supporters with palm branches (*omapokolo*) by traditional chiefs in Owamboland in the 1970s. Moreover, the SAP used electric shocks against civilians suspected of supporting SWAPO combatants. However, the victims of violence had their identities hidden behind codes such as X or Y. As a result, it is challenging to determine whether or not the stories told to Soggot were true or false.

Another shortcoming in Soggot's book is that there is no confirmation that the local civilians who were tortured had assisted PLAN combatants or not. Similarly, Cleaver and Wallace in *Namibia Women in War* (1990) fail to explain if local civilians who were tortured and imprisoned had aided PLAN combatants or not. In the case of this study, I have interviewed participants who were tortured and imprisoned by apartheid security forces. These participants confirmed that they assisted PLAN combatants, which consequently led to their arrest and torture.

Denis Herbstein and John Eveson's book, *The Devils Are Among Us: The War for Namibia* (1989), is also relevant to this study. These two authors provide this study with details on the forms of violence, assaults and atrocities committed by South African Security Forces against civilians in northern Namibia. However, the two authors focus on what Heike Becker (2011) termed "the representation of victimhood" and not the contributions that the civilians were offering to the PLAN combatants.

The discrepancy between official and individual accounts of the Namibian liberation struggle is examined in Martha Akawa's 2003 master's thesis at the University of Western Cape, "*Our memories of the liberation war: How civilians in post-war Northern Namibia remember the war.*" She addresses the issues of how people

remember the liberation war and how it impacts their lives in postcolonial Namibia after observing the lack of personal narratives in the grand national memory.

Akawa focused on how civilians remember and how they relate the memories and the experience of the past, how they locate themselves in public history and their perspectives on national memory and commemorations. The Namibian government has reconstructed the liberation struggle as one where all Namibians fought against colonialism, but it has excluded and suppressed the memories of ordinary citizens. She thus conclude that national memory is one-sided, as it has not included the memories of all Namibians. The civilians have fought and contributed towards the attainment of independence, but their contributions are neither acknowledged nor rewarded. The government however rewarded some civilians who assisted PLAN combatants. The Veteran act of 2008 recognises them as veterans of the Namibian liberation struggle.

The article "*Against trauma: silence, victimhood, and (photo-)voice in northern Namibia*" by Heike Becker (2015) demonstrates how the nationalist master narrative in postwar Namibia was produced in part by the discourses surrounding trauma, victimhood, and silence with reference to local agency. She called attention to those archives of memory that go beyond stories of pain and victimization, which started to introduce new dimensions to the political economy of memory and silence in the middle of the 2000s. An argument that questions the binary distinction between silence and confession is explored by examining visual forms of recollection in northern Namibia.

A number of scholars have written about the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe. Most of the early pieces that surfaced in the 1980s had a joyful tone. In these works, the relationship between guerilla fighters and peasant communities is portrayed as

harmonious. Terrence Ranger, for example, characterizes the relationship between guerrilla fighters and peasants of the Makoni District as an alliance. Admittedly, in his later works, Terrence Ranger (2000) modified his views. In *Violence and Memory*, for example, he not only documented cases of friction between the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) guerrilla fighters and civilians in Matabeleland, but also noted how the latter challenged the former. Still, in *Violence and Memory*, the people who assisted ZIPRA guerilla fighters were mostly ZAPU branch chairpersons, and not ordinary villagers. Overall, one gets the impression of a guerilla movement that was able to develop a cordial relationship with civilians, a relationship that was, however, punctuated by misunderstandings that were quickly and amicably resolved when branch chairpersons intervene.

## Socio-political interactions

In explaining the socio-political interactions between the local population and PLAN combatants, Collin Leys and John Saul (1995) argue that, up until 1982, SWAPO had politicised the role of PLAN combatants. These combatants moved continuously and easily among the people of Owamboland. They were able to communicate with the local civilians and convince them to support SWAPO and its PLAN guerrillas in the fight against apartheid colonists. However, from 1982 onward, the politicised role of PLAN combatants began to wane. This was because of the intensification of the South African military campaign. The political education of civilians that Ekandjo (2011) alluded to was necessary because, in the late 1970s, many local civilians were meeting PLAN combatants for the first time. Paul Sturges (2004) pointed out that in the early years of the conflict, PLAN guerrillas walked freely in northern Namibia. The mobility of PLAN combatants showed political education as the initial activity of the guerrillas

when they entered the country from exile. However, in the 1980s, it was difficult for PLAN combatants to walk around freely in northern Namibia while conducting political mobilisation. Police units like Koevoet made it difficult as they hunted down PLAN combatants and civilians who were giving them assistance (Durand, 2011).

In Mozambique, as explained by Paolo Israel (2017), atrocities such as Mueda massacre was archived musically through songs which were then sang by the local population. The massacre that occurred in the northern Mozambican town of Mueda on 16 June 1960 has been inscribed in the nationalist narrative as the breaking point of anti-colonial unrest and the trigger of the armed liberation struggle. However, Paolo Israel article characterized the Mozambican civilians involved in the Mueda massacre as "illiterate peasants." This phrasing is not only demeaning but also fails to recognize the agency and intellectual capacity of the very people who played a pivotal role in the struggle for Mozambique's independence. By describing them in such a reductive manner, the author overlooked the complexity of their political awareness and the depth of their resistance to colonial rule. The peasants and the leaders who guided them were not merely passive, illiterate individuals but active participants in shaping the course of Mozambique's history. In fact, many of the individuals involved in the demonstration were deeply aware of the political and social realities they faced, and their actions were grounded in a strong sense of justice and a desire for freedom. To reduce them to "illiterate peasants" does a disservice to their struggle and perpetuates harmful stereotypes about the people who fought for Mozambique's independence.

Liazzat Bonate (2013) highlights that the socio-political interactions in Mozambique was cemented on religion especially in Cabo-Delgado province where there were large number of Muslims. Northern Mozambique was the principal region of the liberation struggle against Portuguese colonialism by the people Mozambique. Although a

significant percentage of the population of this region was Muslim, their participation in the Mozambican liberation struggle has hardly been addressed in scholarship, although much has been written on other religions such as Protestants and Catholics. Liazzat Bonate focuses on the response and involvement of Northern Mozambican Muslims in the two provincial nationalist movements, namely the Mozambican African National Union (MANU, also known as Makonde African National Union) and the Frente de Libertação de Moçambique, / Mozambique Liberation Front FRELIMO. Liazzat Bonate (2013) argues that Muslims wished to end colonialism and recover their land. Islam was then used by Muslims of northern Mozambique to rally support for MANU and FRELIMO.

## Theoretical Framework

Patience Viriri (2019) explains that theoretical framework is a fundamental part of any study. It provides a link between the ideas that the researcher wants to portray and what is already known about the topic. In this light, this study used the population centric and enemy centric theories of fighting counterinsurgency. According to Mark Moyar (2010), these two schools of thought have dominated the study of counterinsurgency warfare since the Vietnam War. Adrian Currie & Kirsten Walsh (2016) explains that a theoretical framework in history is a conceptual tool that helps historians and philosophers navigate the complexity of the past. They argue that the past is multifaceted, contingent, and often opaque, making it necessary for historians to select which aspects of the historical record to emphasize and which to downplay. Frameworks provide the principles for this selection, guiding historians in

foregrounding certain elements while backgrounding others. This process is essential for constructing coherent historical narratives and explanations. This robust theoretical framework, enabled the researcher to ensure that this study is grounded in established knowledge and contributes meaningfully to the history of armed struggle not only in Namibia but in Southern Africa.

## The population-centric theory

Kersti Larsdotter (2014) argued that the key to success in the population-centric school of thought is to address the social, political, and economic grievances of the population. The use of force here is considered to estrange the population, hence Leopold Scholtz (2006) asserts that gaining and keeping the support of the local population is what really matters. Gian Gentile (2009) further stipulates that the populations are always the focus, the center of gravity, and they have to be protected. Moreover, he argues that the enemy insurgent as a rule cannot be as important or given the same level of emphasis as the population and that population-centric COIN requires patience on the part of the government which suppresses the insurgents. It demands a certain tactical approach of dispersion into small outposts to live amongst the people to win their hearts and minds; this has become the concept of clear, hold, and build. Population-centric counterinsurgency equals nation-building, and it requires a major investment in time to be successful. Eloff de Visser (2011) explained that the SADF made efforts to gain cooperation with the population on socio-economic help by instilling respectful attitudes towards the population and conducting propaganda campaigns with the intention of depriving SWAPO of the population support.

The lack of unity that dogged the South African war efforts in Namibia was nowhere apparent than the divisions between the SADF and the South African Police (SAP). Koevoet's mode of operation became well known to the local population. It included the destruction of crops and homesteads, physical abuse, and torture during interrogation. Koevoets display of dead insurgents on *casspirs* undermined the SADF's effort to educate soldiers about winning the hearts and minds of the population (Eloff de Visser, 2011). As Arn Durand (2012, p.87) testified, "our (Koevoet) reputation stank. We were branded psychotic, murderers, and rapists by the liberal media which frequently published stories about Koevoet—stories that portrayed Koevoet in a bad way".

Gian Gentile (2009), the U.S. counterinsurgency strategy in Iraq during the Surge (2007-2008) combined enemy-centric tactics (targeting insurgent networks) with population-centric efforts (protecting civilians, rebuilding infrastructure, and fostering local governance). This integrated approach contributed to a significant reduction in violence and improved stability. However in the beginning, Gentile argued that the US struggled in Iraq due to a conventional mindset and a lack of understanding of population-centric counterinsurgency (COIN) principles, mirroring mistakes made in Vietnam and Malaya. The success was then notable when COIN was accurately implemented which marked a shift toward securing populations and winning "hearts and minds," which is credited with reducing violence and achieving successes like deals with the Sons of Iraq and Moqtada al-Sadr's retreat.

### **The enemy-centric theory**

According to Larsdotter (2014) in the enemy-centric school of thought, insurgencies are primarily seen as a military struggle between the belligerents, and the main aim of

the counterinsurgents is to defeat the enemy. The population in the operational area is merely understood as a source of information and supplies for the belligerents, and is not the main focus of the attention. The key to success is instead to kill or capture the enemy. Furthermore, Paul, Clarke, Grill & Dunigan (2016) points out one variant of enemy-centric approach, the so-called draining the sea approach. This approach encompasses brutality against civilian populations can be successfully pursued in counterinsurgency warfare and protracted wars of attrition. The purpose of this approach is to weaken the enemy quickly and end the conflict as soon as possible. Counter-intelligence police unit like Koevoet opted for the enemy centric approach to fight SWAPO combatants, and as Visser (2011, p 91) put it, Koevoet became “a highly effective search and destroy unit”. Thus, tried to defeat SWAPO through the barrel of a gun. Which unfortunately, never ended the war.

Durand (2012) states that Koevoet was killing a lot of SWAPO PLAN fighters, and they were killing very few Koevoet. But there was more to this fight than we realized. Furthermore, SWAPO was fighting a transnational insurgency with military bases in Angola and Zambia. To defeat them militarily was difficult because SWAPO combatants kept on infiltrating northern Namibia from Angolan bases. SADF invasions of Angola in 1975 to root out SWAPO did not defeat SWAPO militarily either.

The American war in Vietnam from 1955-1975 is sometimes criticized for being overly enemy-centric, focusing primarily on defeating the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and the Viet Cong (VC) through large-scale military operations, body counts, and attrition warfare, rather than addressing the political and social dimensions of the conflict. This approach is seen as a key factor in the U.S. failure to achieve its objectives in Vietnam. Andrew Krepinevich (1986) argues that the U.S. Army's

conventional mindset and focus on attrition warfare were ill-suited for the counterinsurgency environment in Vietnam. He criticizes the Army for failing to adopt a population-centric approach and for its reliance on large-scale operations that alienated the Vietnamese population. The U.S. strategy in Vietnam largely ignored the importance of hearts and minds. Operations like bombing campaigns for example Operation Rolling Thunder, and the use of defoliants (e.g., Agent Orange) caused widespread civilian suffering, further eroding trust in the U.S. and South Vietnamese forces. Furthermore, Max Boot (2018) criticizes the U.S. military, under General William Westmoreland for prioritized search-and-destroy missions and body counts as metrics of success. This approach aimed to wear down the enemy through sheer firepower and attrition but failed to address the underlying causes of the insurgency, such as the lack of legitimacy of the South Vietnamese government and the grievances of the rural population. The emphasis on body counts often led to indiscriminate violence, alienating the very population whose support was crucial for success.

**Comparative Analysis enemy-centric and population- centric Theory**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Enemy-Centric Theory</b>	<b>Population-Centric Theory</b>
<b>Primary Objective</b>	Defeat the enemy militarily	Win the support of the population
<b>Focus</b>	Military operations	Social, political, and economic grievances
<b>Use of Force</b>	Heavy reliance on military force	Minimal and carefully calibrated use of force
<b>View of Population</b>	Source of intelligence or enemy support	Key to success; must be protected and supported
<b>Timeframe</b>	Short-term; aims for quick results	Long-term; focuses on sustainable peace
<b>Ethical Considerations</b>	Often involves harsh measures and civilian harm	Prioritizes civilian protection and human rights

Figure 1. Comparative analysis of enemy-centric and population-centric theory

## Oral history

This research encountered a lack of literature about Oshitudha civilians' contribution to Namibia's liberation struggle. However, many civilians still remember the contributions that they made to Namibia's armed liberation struggle. In the absence of documented literature about Oshitudha, oral interviews are therefore central to the data gathering, findings, discussions and analysis of this study. The advantage of oral sources is that they provide primary information when there are no written sources. Monsuru Babatunde (2015) argued that oral tradition constitutes the bulk of the sources from which the history of Africa can be reconstructed. Oral history is a reliable source of information. Throughout history, African societies have used oral tradition to transmit their history, customs, folklore and traditions from one generation to another.

However, oral history has become the subject of critical scrutiny, and the researcher was aware of these shortcomings. Lovisa Nampala (2015) argued that oral sources present the challenge that the information provided may not be reliable. This can be attributed to the fading of the participants memories after the events took place. When a story is told, the sequence of events can also become confusing and oral narratives are seldom in chronological order, with the exact date that an event took place often only vaguely remembered. The researcher tried to address these challenges by interviewing thirty (30) participants. The larger number of participants made it possible to record as many narratives as possible. Furthermore, the researcher interviewed participants at two different intervals. This allowed participants to remember events that they left out during the first session of the interview. Moreover, to ascertain reliability and credibility of the oral interviews, interviews were cross-

referenced with published articles in local newspapers, such as *The Namibian* newspaper.

## Summary

This chapter provided an analysis of the literature that the research perceived relevant to the contributions that Oshitudha civilians made to Namibia's liberation struggle. The analysis of the literature was done according to the three objectives of this study. Very importantly, the chapter discussed why oral interviews are central to this study in the quest to fill existing gaps in the historiography of different contributions that civilians in the war zone made during Namibia's armed liberation struggle. The next chapter discusses the research methods that the researcher used to collect data for this study.

## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

This chapter provides a description of the research methods that the researcher used to collect data for this study. Important components of this chapter elaborate on the research design, research instruments, the population of the study, validity and reliability, sampling methods, and the procedure embarked upon by the researcher to collect data for the study. Similarly, the chapter demonstrates how the researcher analysed the data gathered from interviews. Furthermore, the chapter highlights the challenges that the researcher encountered during the research process and the remedial actions that were taken to address the challenges. The last part of the chapter focuses on theories that guided the researcher throughout the study. This chapter is therefore a framework through which the contributions made by Oshitudha civilians during Namibia's liberation struggle were investigated.

### Research design

This case study employed a qualitative approach. This method facilitated the researcher's ability to collect data through interviews with some of the witnesses of the armed liberation struggle in Oshitudha village. As such, the researcher was able to come to a meaningful conclusion about Oshitudha civilians' contribution to Namibia's liberation struggle using a case study approach. William Neuman (2011) argued that a case study examines many features of a few cases. Furthermore, the data on case studies are detailed, varied, and extensive. It can focus on a single point in time or a duration of time. One of the major strengths of the case study is that it has room for

holistic elaboration. A case study can elaborate on an entire situation or process holistically and permit the incorporation of multiple perspectives or viewpoints.

## Population

It is difficult to determine the precise population of Oshitudha village during colonial times. Ndeutala Hishongwa (1992) shared similar feelings when she mentioned the difficulty of obtaining reliable demographic numbers of people in Owamboland during the South African colonial period. The first headmen of Oshitudha, Ekandjo Kasuuka (1956 - 1980), as well as his successor, Kaningwalenga Abraham (1980 - 2003), did not keep records of the number of people in the village. According to Ndapuka Abraham's estimation, there are one hundred people who contributed to Namibia's armed liberation struggle in Oshitudha village. The number could be high, but many people have since passed away. Furthermore, at the time of conducting field work for this study, there were ten former PLAN soldiers who were born in Oshitudha village and who also operated in Oshitudha as PLAN combatants during the war for Namibia's independence.

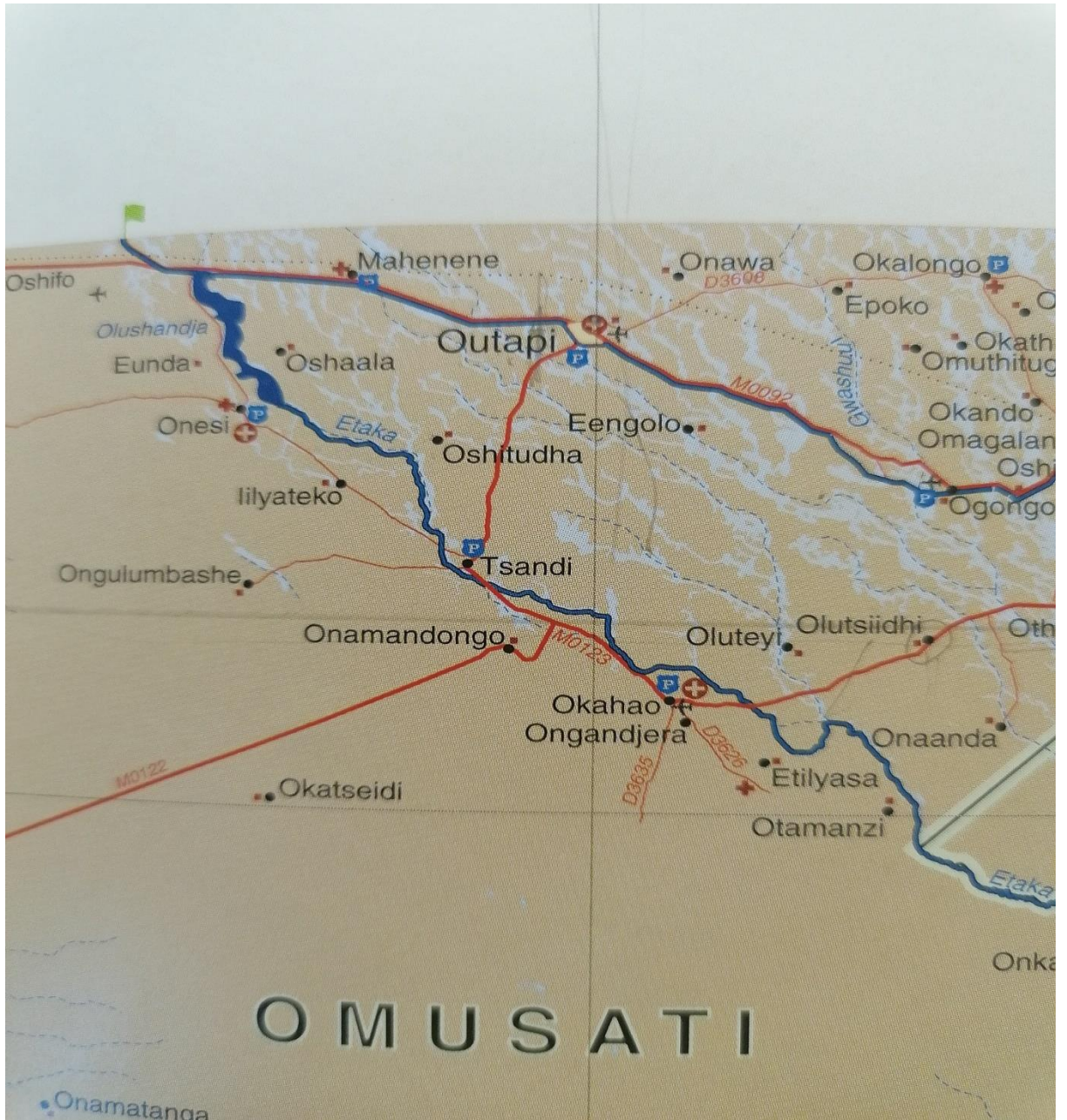


Figure 2: Oshitudha village, its neighboring villages and towns as illustrated in the map of Omusati region. Source: John Mendelson, David Philip Publishers, 2002.

## **Sample**

Snowball and purposive sampling were utilised in this study. Purposive sampling was followed by snowball sampling. As a result of utilising these two types of sampling methods, twenty-three participants were selected to take part in the study. Gregory Pascoe (2014) stated that snowball sampling makes use of referrals to increase the sample size. Participants in the study suggested other people who also fit the population parameters of the study and who could also be interviewed. Moreover, two former PLAN combatants, who hailed from Oshitudha and operated in the village during the liberation struggle, were purposively selected to participate in the study. According to William Neuman (2011), purposive sampling uses the judgement of an expert in selecting cases, or it selects cases with a specific purpose in mind. The two former PLAN combatants were able to confirm whether or not Oshitudha residents were involved in supporting PLAN combatants during the Namibian liberation struggle.

## **Research instruments**

The researcher administered a semi-structured interview guide to collect data during the interviews. The semi-structured guide was advantageous because it allowed the researcher to prepare questions in advance to guide the discussion and keep interviewees on topic. Some interviews were recorded with a digital voice recorder.

## **Procedure**

After obtained ethical clearance from the University of Namibia's Research Ethics Committee (UREC), I created a semi-structured interview guide in line with the objectives of the study. This was followed by a letter that the researcher addressed to the Omusati Regional Council, seeking permission to carry out the study in the

Omusati region. Permission to conduct interviews was granted within a week. Following that, I went to the office of Fillemon Shikwambi, the councillor of the Outapi constituency, to obtain verbal permission to conduct the study in his area of jurisdiction. Shikwambi made an announcement on Namibia Broadcasting Corporation's Kati Mukupulwapale radio, informing Oshitudha villagers that a history student from the University of Namibia will visit some Oshitudha villagers. He explained that the purpose of the visit was to carry out interviews about the contribution made by Oshitudha villagers during the Namibian liberation struggle. He further explained that the study is not a hoax or political but entirely academic. Following the radio announcement, the researcher visited the headman of Oshitudha village, Ndeshitila Shinayene Kasuuka, to seek permission to carry out interviews in his village. The permission was granted and interviews started within a few days. Respondents who agreed to be interviewed were recorded with a digital voice recorder. Recorded interviews were transcribed and analysed with content analysis.

## Data Collection Methods

Interviews were used to acquire data for this study. Nicholas Walliman (2005) posited that the world is full of potential data. The researcher, however, was only interested in collecting data that was relevant to the study in order to investigate the research problem.

## Interviews

This study used face-to-face interviews to collect data from the interviewees. This method proved very effective for this study, because as the respondents answered questions, the researcher kept on probing further about different aspects

regarding the contributions of Oshitudha civilians to Namibia's armed liberation struggle. The researcher explained questions to respondents who could not understand some of the questions on the interview guide. A few participants refused to have their voices recorded. However, 32 they allowed the researcher take notes during the interviews. Interviews were done at the respondents preferred places.

## Interview guide

Chris Welman, et al (2005) explained that an interview guide involves a list of topics and aspects of the topics that have a bearing on the given theme that the interviewer should raise during the course of the interview. This must be done, especially if the interviewer does not do so himself or herself. The interview guides were designed in such a way that they addressed the objectives of the study. Thus, ushering the "researcher to note what to ask, in what sequence, how to pose questions, and how to follow up on a previously asked question" (Kennedy, 2006, as cited in Patience Viriri 2019). The interview guided the researcher by making sure that every respondent was asked all themes and queries and that no facet or topic of the study was left out.

## Data analysis

The data collected for this study was analysed in relation to the research objectives of the study. Since a huge amount of data was collected, qualitative data was analysed with content analysis, "to identify the main themes that emerge from the responses given by the participants" (Kumar Ranjit, 2012). Recorded interviews were transcribed, analysed, and examined accordingly. The researcher studied the data and

carefully organised them into different themes of the Namibian armed liberation struggle.

## Challenges encountered and Remedies

The researcher encountered some challenges during the process of collecting data in Oshitudha village. These challenges, which I have explained below, included a lack of funding, Namibia general elections in 2019, the covid-19 pandemic, and the registration of war veterans. However, the researcher had to come up with successful solutions to these challenges.

### Lack of funding

The researcher had no funding for this study. This presented him with a practical challenge when it came to customary norms. According to Oshiwambo cultural norms, a visitor is always expected to carry a gift when visiting. This is particularly so because most of the respondents chose to be interviewed in their homesteads. However, the researcher had a small budget for field work which he used wisely to buy small household items as gifts for his interviewees. The respondents, however, appreciated these small gifts. Moreover, interviews ended up lasting longer than the two hours that the researcher had anticipated, and resulted in interviewing fewer participants per day.

### General elections

The researcher encountered disturbing rumours that started to swamp Oshitudha village during data collection. This included allegations that the researcher was collecting information for Panduleni Iitula, who ran as an Independent candidate in the

2019 presidential elections in Namibia. Following the presidential elections, Iitula founded the Independent Patriots for Change (IPC) in August 2020. The base of support for this party came mainly from the youth. Given that SWAPO lost numerous political constituencies to IPC in the 2019 elections, the bulk of the older generation and supporters of SWAPO in Oshitudha were outraged by the ruling party's poor performance since coming to power in 1990.

In light of the above scenario, my status as a youth almost threatened data gathering for this project. Some former PLAN combatants declined to be interviewed, claiming Iitula influence and the chance that I was an IPC agent. For instance, Simon Nafatali Kapuleko, a prominent PLAN combatant who was deployed to Oshitudha village during the war for Namibia's independence, refused to be interviewed. Although Aune Simon, his sister, did arrange a meet for the interview to take place at Omasha shebeens in Oshitudha village, I was so disappointed when Kapuleko started to interrogate me about alleged connections to Iitula and refused to be interviewed. As the situation threatened to get out of hand, I feared that if potential respondents were informed about such rumours, they would refuse to take part in the study. To prevent this problem, I had to go back to Outapi constituency councillor, Fillemon Shikwambi to seek his intervention. He made an announcement on Kati Mukupulwapale radio, explaining that my fieldwork had nothing to do with IPC. Following the councillors' announcement, some prospective interviewees agreed to be interviewed. Yet, some participants continued to suspect that the researcher was working for IPC.

## Covid-19 pandemic

The deadly pandemic had negative effects on my study. Firstly, there were nationwide lockdowns in 2020 and 2021. Thus, the researcher was not able to travel to Oshitudha

village to conduct interviews during that period. The researcher had to wait for the lifting of the lockdowns so that he could travel to Oshitudha. Also, the researcher had to travel with a certificate indicating that he is COVID-19 negative. Furthermore, three referrals whom the researcher was referred to died of COVID-19 before they were interviewed.

## War Veterans registration

Many civilians from Oshitudha village who participated in the war for the Namibian armed liberation struggle were not registered as war veterans. Thus, they were not entitled to any monetary benefits that some war veterans receive from the Ministry of Veteran Affairs. As I was kick-starting the interviews, some Oshitudha civilians started coming to me, thinking that I was registering people who assisted PLAN combatants, to acquire veteran status and monthly allowances. I had to clarify several times that I am not employed by the Ministry of Veteran Affairs and that the interviews were purely for academic purpose.

## Validity and Reliability

The notion of validity and reliability is often used as a foundation for accuracy in research projects. Similarly, validity and reliability give assurance of good quality-research. Chris Welman, Fanie Krugaer & Bruce Mitchell (2005) posited that validity is the extent to which the research findings accurately represent what really happened in a situation. In order to ensure validity, the researcher used snowball sampling to avoid respondent bias. Respondents referred the researcher to people who witnessed and participated in Namibia's liberation war in Oshitudha village. Furthermore, after I finished with the interviews and data analysis, I had to do validation interviews with

some participants again. The researcher had to ask the participants if they agreed with the analysis, interpretations, and the findings of the study.

The researcher carried out pre-testing interviews with six respondents before the actual interviews. Nicholas Walliman (2005) explains that it is necessary to perform a pilot study on a small number of respondents from the population of interest in order to establish any possible errors or problems that may surface. Concerning this study, the data from a pilot study was analysed and interpreted. I then noticed some gaps, such as the omission of civilians experiences of torture and intimidation by members of the South African Security Forces.

Reliability refers to whether the data collection techniques and analysis procedures would reproduce consistent findings if they were repeated on another occasion or if they were replicated by another researcher. To ensure the reliability of this study, the researcher avoided any bias or error by remaining impartial during the interview process. Participants' errors and biases were addressed by interviewing former PLAN combatants who operated in Oshitudha during the war. Thus, ensuring that the study findings are indeed reliable. I also excluded anonymity from the study as a tool for ensuring the validity and reliability of the study. All participant identities were therefore revealed. Furthermore, the study was supervised by Vilho Shigwedha, who is a former PLAN combatant and an expert on the history of the Namibian armed liberation struggle.

## Research ethics

The researcher was granted an ethical clearance certificate by the University of Namibia Research Ethics Committee (UREC) in accordance with the institution's research ethics policy and guidelines. As such, the researcher followed all ethical processes as per the University of Namibia's prescription. This was done to ensure that all considerations relating to research ethics were addressed and adhered to. All participants were provided with a participant information leaflet and consent form. The researcher further explained the objectives of the study before respondents agreed to participate in it or not. Participants who agreed to take part in the study were given informed consent forms to sign before taking part in the study.

Similarly, the special consent form was designed for participants to sign and give the researcher permission to use their names in the study. Participants' identities were revealed in order to guarantee the authenticity, validity, and reliability of the study. No interviewee was forced, coerced, or intimidated to participate in the study. Participants were also briefed that they could withdraw from the study at any time, regardless of the signed consent form, without any consequences.

I had a telephone number of a psychologist from Ndeyapo's psychological practice in Ondangwa. The psychologist was ready to intervene should participants experience discomfort recalling their memories of the armed liberation struggle. Structured interview guides were translated into Oshiwambo so that participants could understand the questions. Recorded interviews were later transcribed. Recordings from the study are deposited with the University of Namibia Archives. They cannot be destroyed, as

they are significant to the undocumented history of the Namibian armed liberation struggle.

## Summary

This chapter discussed the methodology of this study by outlining the methods and techniques that were used to explore different roles that many civilians in Oshitudha played in supporting PLAN combatants. The study used a qualitative research approach in the form of a case study design. The target population, sampling and data collection methods were also outlined in this chapter. The collected data was analyzed with content analysis with the support of themes of the Namibian armed liberation struggle that emerged from the interviews based on the objectives of the study. The validity and reliability of the study were ensured with pre-testing and triangulation of data collection instruments. The challenges that the researcher encountered include a lack of funding, Namibia's 2019 general elections and veteran status. The challenges were successfully met with solutions. The chapter resonantly addressed the ethical issues in the study. The last part of the chapter discussed the theoretical framework, which outlined the theory that guided the researcher throughout the study.

The next chapter presents the support which was offered to PLAN combatants by Oshitudha civilians.

## CHAPTER 4

### LOCAL SUPPORT FOR PLAN COMBATANTS

#### Introduction

This chapter presents the findings on how some of the selected Oshitudha civilians assisted PLAN combatants during Namibia's armed liberation struggle. The chapter begins by outlining how Oshitudha villagers fed, shielded, sheltered, transported, treated the wounded or those who were sick and secretly buried deceased PLAN combatants in Oshitudha village. The next section of the chapter describes how Oshitudha civilians hosted exile-bound refugees, ran errands, clothed PLAN combatants and fed them with intelligence information. The findings presented in this chapter were generated from an analysis of qualitative data that was collected through interviews conducted with civilians from Oshitudha village.

#### Food provision for PLAN combatants

This subtheme examines how PLAN combatants depended on Oshitudha civilians for food and water during Namibia's armed liberation struggle. This examination considers the claim made by Susan Brown (1995) who pointed out that local homesteads in the war zone supplied food to PLAN combatants. Furthermore, Peter Ekandjo (2014) and Jim Hooper (1988) both claimed that the local population in northern Namibia made it possible for PLAN combatants to operate inside Namibia. They further pointed out that PLAN fighters could not have operated successfully without food provision which local populations in the war zone provided. Participants that I interviewed told me that they fed PLAN combatants on numerous occasions during the war, especially when the war intensified between 1979 and 1990. According

to Shinayene Kasuuka, PLAN combatants received food from his homestead whenever they were operating in the village. In this connection, Ndatila Ashaama, Kasuuka's wife, stated the following:

I cooked for PLAN combatants whenever they visited our homestead. Sometimes they preferred to eat in the bush. Therefore, assisted by my two daughters: Kauna and Martha, I took the food to where they camped in the bush. I made sure they ate porridge in the morning because they needed a lot of energy for the day.

The choice to eat in the bush meant that safety and security for both civilians and PLAN combatants were paramount. Sisingi Kamongo (2011), Arn Durand (2011), and Arn Durand (2012) confirm that Koevoet invaded the local population's Omahangu field with their vehicles, destroying their crops. They argued that this was motivated by the fact that the locals provided food to PLAN combatants. Moreover, Sisingi Kamongo and Arn Durand argue that more often than not, there was clear evidence that tracks of PLAN combatants came out of pro-SWAPO homesteads; hence, torture and burning of those homesteads were necessary. Furthermore, PLAN combatants were often caught inside the homesteads, which resulted in a firefight with Koevoet forces. Another respondent, Heini Isak, claimed that PLAN combatants depended entirely on civilians for food. This claim is supported by Simon Kanyala, who operated in Oshitudha village as a PLAN combatant. During the interview, Kanyala pointed out that PLAN combatants received canned food when they left Angola to carry out guerrilla operations inside Namibia. However, because they had to walk long distances from Angola to Namibia, they could not take a lot of canned food. Hence, they were conditioned to rely on local populations for food.

Loide Embula posited that cooking food for PLAN combatants was done whenever they visited specific homesteads, even if it was late at night. The same sentiment was

echoed by Magano Abraham, who insisted that PLAN combatants would sometimes wake her up in the middle of the night and asked her to prepare food for them. Abraham's account is reminiscent of the following excerpt from the interview that I conducted with Aune Ilonga:

I used to be awoken up by a beaming torch light flashing inside my bedroom. This was followed by a voice saying, 'wake up, *Meme* (Mother).' We're your children - hungry. I had to cook for them if there was not enough food left in the pot.

In June 1979, the South African Apartheid regime introduced curfew laws in the so-called security districts of Owambo, Kavango and Eastern Caprivi. According to David Smut (2019), the curfew prohibited people's movement in the district of Owambo after sunset and before sunrise without the permission of the peace officer or officer of the security forces. Thus, with the introduction of curfew, it became extremely risky to prepare food for PLAN combatants. Ndilinawa Rautia explained that:

By sunset, everybody was compelled to be in bed and any lighting of a fire in the homestead at night was forbidden. The military planes bombed any place spotted with a firelight at night. Their excuse could be that the villagers who had lit the fire were preparing food for SWAPO terrorists, who usually visit homesteads at night. To ensure that the combatants did not go hungry, I made my kitchen inside a mud hut, where the fire would not be spotted by the South African surveillance planes.

The staple food for Aawambo is porridge made from Omahangu flour, the main crop cultivated by the Aawambo people in north-central Namibia. Porridge can be served with meat, *Omboga* (Cleome gynandra spinach \ African cabbage) or milk. Beef, pork, chevon and mutton were scarce and expensive, yet that did not prevent some Oshitudha civilians from slaughtering goats and cattle for PLAN combatants. Aune Ilonga

narrated that in 1982, when PLAN combatants escorted learners and teachers from the Oshitudha combined school to Angola, she gave them a goat to slaughter before they trekked to Angola.

Similarly, Pinhas Ataleni pointed out that he gave PLAN combatants two goats on two separate occasions. The first time was in March 1983, when four PLAN combatants found him at his livestock kraal. One of the combatants informed Ataleni that one of his comrades was suffering from *onyango* or *olwiidhi*. *Olwiidhi* means malaria, which was prominent in northern Namibia usually between the months of February and May. PLAN soldiers believed that their sick comrade needed chevon to regain strength and recover from the sickness. Ataleni gave them a goat which PLAN combatants slaughtered in the bush next to his homestead. The second time was in April 1984, when three PLAN combatants came to Ataleni's homestead hungry and tired. One of them was seriously injured in battle. This is when he gave them the second goat which they slaughtered in the bush close to Pinhas' homestead. According to Loide Ndilinawa, when PLAN combatants were given a goat, they usually took it to the bush where they slaughtered it and buried the skin. This was done to keep the South African Security Forces in the dark and protect the local population from torture.

Peter Ekandjo (2014) pointed out that some local populations in the war zone even slaughtered their cattle to feed PLAN combatants. This research also revealed that when the situation was tense in the village, PLAN combatants relocated to cattle posts where men from Oshitudha stayed with cattle. Therefore, cattle posts such as Oshaaholongo, Okangwiya, and Etumba, which are located around 70 to 80 kilometers west of Oshitudha, served as PLAN militants' safe havens as well. Shinayene Kasuukapointed out that livestock owners sent surplus food supplies to the

cattle posts for the cattle herders to share with PLAN combatants. As a result, cattle livestock owners became targets of the South African Security Forces. Kasuuka gave an example of Oshitudha cattle herders who were intercepted by members of the South African Security Forces at Oghunga village on the 11<sup>th</sup> November 1987. They were later rounded up at Uuwelekeshe shebeens in Oghunga village, close to Oshitudha village, where they were assaulted by the South African Security Forces. The food supply that they were carrying was destroyed by the South African Security Forces and cattle herders were ordered to return home. Simon Kanyala, a former PLAN combatant who operated in Oshitudha between 1982 and 1989 confirmed that:

Members of the South African Security Forces banned livestock owners from supplying excessive amounts of food to their cattle posts. For example, *Omahangu* flour was to be carried in twenty kilogram bags only, and not fifty kilogram bags.

Nevertheless, Oshitudha civilians also gave money to PLAN combatants to buy food. Soini Ndilinawa explained that financial assistance was crucial for PLAN combatants' operations in the war zone. Because, when they had money, they would not seek local assistance for food, thus keeping their presence in the area hidden from many people in the village.

Norma Kriger (1992) observes that the guerrillas in Zimbabwe utilised distinct tactics in relation to the local populace's provision of food. While Ndilinawa Rautia claimed that PLAN soldiers would take whatever food was offered, and Pinhas Ataleni said that they hardly ever demanded meat. Norma Kriger drew attention to the fact that in Zimbabwe, guerrillas would never do so with vegetables, which were considered a luxury in their own diets. The local populace was forced to witness the sparse resources being depleted. Twenty comrades could devour ten chickens. The local civilians could

cook five times in a night if the food was not enough for the comrades. Even at midnight, insurgents might wake up farm owners to find a goat from each village. To make matters worse, the villagers had to cater to the tastes of different guerrilla groups. One group might ask for the liver, saying it is good. Another group might say they do not like entrails; our spirits do not like them. Norma Kriger (1992) argues that the goat and chicken population plummeted and became a rare commodity in villages. In the Gudyanga district of Zimbabwe. Nathaniel Chimhete (2019) also claimed that local civilians complained about the difficult demands that guerrilla fighters imposed on them. One of their complaints was the guerrilla fighters' demand for meat, usually chicken or goat. Guerrilla fighters always couched their demands on civilians as a little sacrifice for the national cause. As one of the mujibha (male youth) put it, 'they always said, "We sleep like animals in the bush, getting beaten by snakes so that we can liberate our country. What is a goat compared to what we are going through? In response, some community members framed the motives for going to war in individualistic terms. Simon Kanyala, a former PLAN combatant from Oshitudha village who also fought the war in Oshitudha, explained that they were careful not to burden Oshitudha civilians with food provisions. Thus, no large groups of PLAN combatants ate at one homestead. "If you are six, three comrades ate in one homestead and the other three in the other homestead." Furthermore, if the group has twenty fighters, they were distributed to different villages. This prevented us from finishing supplies in Oshitudha village and caused hunger in the village.

## Shielding PLAN combatants

The shielding of PLAN combatants by Oshitudha civilians entails the protection measures that Oshitudha civilians implemented to ensure that PLAN combatants were protected from the South African Security Forces. Rautia Ndilinawa pointed out that

she protected PLAN combatants from the South African Security Forces by always keeping their whereabouts a secret whenever they visited the village. Similar sentiments were expressed by Fredricks Fillemon, who claimed that:

One afternoon on February 20, 1986, *Koevoet* members tortured me at my homestead. A PLAN combatant witnessed everything that happened to me from the bush near my homestead. I knew he was hiding in the nearby bush, but I did not disclose his whereabouts to the South African Security Forces.

John ya Palangi, who was also interrogated by *Koevoet* about the whereabouts of PLAN combatants, added the following:

I knew the whereabouts of PLAN combatants. I could have successfully led *Koevoet* to a location where they were hiding, but I kept it a top secret. Some PLAN combatants were from my village, Oshitudha. As such, I vowed not to betray them to *Koevoet*.

Soini Ndilinawa, an ex-PLAN combatant ascertained the role that Oshitudha civilians played in shielding PLAN combatants. He explained that, on many occasions, when *Koevoet* tracked down PLAN combatants, Oshitudha civilians erased the tracks of the fleeing PLAN combatants. The expurgation of PLAN combatants' tracks by Oshitudha civilians was done using two methods. These included, the deliberate herding of domestic animals on the tracks of PLAN combatants. Susan Brown (1995) seconded the idea that local supporters of PLAN combatants in northern Namibia would drive herds of cattle behind PLAN groups to conceal their spoor. The other method of erasing the evidence was to cut tree branches that were hauled over the tracks of PLAN combatants. Sisingi Kamongo (2011) asserted that many times, his group of *Koevoet* officers would track the spoor of PLAN insurgents but as soon as they reached homesteads these tracks disappeared. This helps to explain further that local civilians destroyed the tracks of PLAN combatants to protect them from *Koevoet*.

Similarly, Oshitudha civilians also hid PLAN combatants in their homesteads whenever they were in danger from Koevoet and their local handlers. Willem Kaghono stated that plain-clothed PLAN combatants occasionally resided in his homestead disguised as members of his family. To protect their identity as PLAN combatants, they were introduced to the neighbours and Oshitudha community at large as members of the extended family of Kaghono from southern Angola. The shielding of PLAN combatants against possible ruthless reprisal of the South African Security Forces was also entrenched in the hearts and minds of children in Oshitudha village. As an illustration, parents of young boys between the ages of 8 and 12, who frequently looked after livestock in the veld, gave them stern warnings that if they saw PLAN combatants while taking cattle for grazing, they should not reveal it should Koevoet interrogate them.

Iita Petrus, who was a teenager during the war for liberation struggle recalled how on numerous occasions, the South African Security Forces would find him herding cattle in the veld.

They often asked me where I had seen SWAPO terrorists. ‘I have not seen them’, I always gave them that answer. I had to lie, because should I tell them the truth, they could have killed, arrested, or imprisoned my parents. Our homestead could have been burnt down.

## Sheltering PLAN combatants

The sheltering of PLAN combatants by Oshitudha civilians was another form of protection that was provided to PLAN combatants against harsh weather. Peter Ekanjo (2011) explained that most of the time, PLAN combatants were exposed to the vagaries of the weather such as rain and cold. The worst thing was that during winter, PLAN combatants had no blankets to shield themselves from the harsh cold

weather. Participants that I interviewed revealed that they provided PLAN combatants with accommodation and gave blankets to combatants who opted to sleep in the bush. In the context of this study, it is worth noting that sheltering and shielding PLAN combatants are two different activities. Because, shielding PLAN combatants meant saving their lives from the danger of South African Security Forces and their local collaborators. Sheltering, on the other hand, included providing the combatants with accommodation and blankets especially during the cold winter season that lasted between May and August. In respect of the earlier, Oshitudha civilians shielded injured PLAN combatants using different tactics of concealing them until their comrades came to their rescue. Loide Ndilinawa pointed out that wounded PLAN combatants were usually hidden inside grain granaries, locally called *Omashisha*. Pinhas Ataleni claimed that he shielded injured PLAN combatants on numerous occasions.

I provided refuge to several injured PLAN combatants on my homestead. The most notable occasion was when a PLAN combatant was pursued by the South African Security Forces from Okathitu ka LyokoTsandi village. We hid him inside an empty grain granary in the granaries section of my homestead, where he stayed for three days.

Matheus Shimweneni, remembered that at sunset on Saturday, 10 March 1987, Oshitudha civilians saw South African Security Forces tracking down two PLAN combatants who were traced from Ondukuta village, 10 km south of Oshitudha village. One of the PLAN combatants was Simon Kanyala, a resident of Oshitudha. As the combatants stopped at Paulus Shimweneni's shebeen at the outskirts of his homestead, the South African Security Forces finally caught up with them. One of them was killed a short distance from Shimweneni's shebeen. Aided by his knowledge of Oshitudha topography, Simon Kanyala managed to escape. Koevoet collected the body of the slain combatant and tied it on the wheel of a Casspir. They assembled villagers,

including children, whose homesteads were adjacent to the spot where the PLAN combatant was killed and forced them to view the dead body of alleged PLAN combatant. “Look at how we are killing your children!” These were some of the disturbing statements that Koevoet made as the villagers viewed the dead body that was displayed on the wheels of a casspir armed vehicle. Meanwhile, Simon Kanyala who survived the battle found refuge in the homestead of Tresia Nambashu who narrated the following:

Simon Kanyala was so hungry and exhausted when he arrived at my homestead. I cooked for him and gave him a room to sleep. Luckily Koevoet did not follow his spore to my house. In the morning, I prepared breakfast for him. He ate and headed to the nearby bushes where PLAN combatants had an assembling point.

## Motors, Bicycles and Donkeys

This subtheme examines how Oshitudha civilians provided transport to PLAN fighters to facilitate their movements around the war zone. Motor vehicles, bicycles and donkeys were major transport modes that Oshitudha civilians offered to PLAN combatants. Susan Brown (1995) explained that PLAN's heavy materials were loaded on donkey carts in cases where motor vehicles were not available. Nevertheless, some local business people in Owamboland with vehicles provided transport to take guerrillas and their equipment to their desired destinations. Between 1980 and 1990 Heini Isak taught at Oshitudha primary school, and her salary enabled her to buy bicycles for PLAN combatants. Similarly, in 1984, Ruben Auwanga gave PLAN combatants two bicycles. He told me the following:

In April 1984 ten PLAN combatants were tasked to carry out a mission in Ongandjera. They asked me to give them bicycles, and ensured me that when they have accomplished their mission, my bicycles would be

returned to me. I told them not to worry about returning the bicycles as long as they fulfilled their mission.

Oshitudha civilians also transported PLAN combatants with their bicycles to their intended destinations. Ndilinawa Ndeshitila told me that in 1988, he transported an injured PLAN combatant, Samuel Kambungu, with his bicycle to the Angolan-Namibian border. Pinhas Ataleni narrated that bicycles were important to PLAN combatants who were gathering intelligence information about the movement and military infrastructure of the South African Security Forces in the war zone. According to Heini Isak, the SASF retaliated by confiscating bicycles in the village Loide Ndilinawa still remembers the following:

They claimed that we were supplying bicycles to SWAPO terrorists, and confiscated four bicycles that we owned.

The other useful mode of transport that Oshitudha civilians gave to PLAN combatants were motor vehicles. Matheus Shimweneni, David Katanga, Kalume Abraham, Ruben Matheus and Philemon Ndilinawa who were employees of the Consolidated Diamond Mines (CDM) at Oranjemund, southern Namibia, used their vehicles to transport PLAN combatants. Loide Ndilinawa narrated the following:

Philemon Ndilinawa, my late husband, transported PLAN combatants with his car from Oshitudha village to the Namibian northern border with southern Angola. He also transported them within the war zone. For instance, from Oshitudha to Iilyateko, 30 kilometres south-west of Oshitudha village. He was once intercepted and interrogated by members by Koevoet, interrogated and released when he told them that he was transporting villagers to Outapi district hospital.

Matheus Shimweneni, who worked for the CDM during Namibia's armed liberation struggle narrated the following:

I used to transport PLAN combatants from Oshitudha village to the Namibian and Angolan border. I also transported civilians who were fleeing into exile. The dropping-off point for people that were fleeing the country was the homestead of Shagheta sha Eelu at Omufitu wEelo village, adjacent to the Namibian and Angolan border.

Malakia Ndakalako pointed out that Oshitudha civilians risked their lives by transporting PLAN combatants because of the curfew that was in place. *The Namibian* newspaper of 12 August 1988 reported that numerous civilian vehicles were shot by the South African Security Forces. It also reported the fatal shooting of seven civilians at Nkongo [Okongo] village, who were shot without a warning from the South African Security Forces. The driver and occupants survived the shooting but they were hospitalized. Similarly, Chris Shipanga reported in *The Namibian* of 26 February, 1988 that a young woman, Rebecca Mulyofika, and her companion, an eighteen-year old Paulus Shikale, were shot by members of the South African Security Forces. The duo was on a bicycle, returning home from shopping at Omafo, Engela, when members of the South African Security Forces opened fire on them without a warning. Rebecca was shot dead at the spot.

## Pauper burials

Following the discovery of a mass grave at Eenhana in November 2005, Heicke Becker (2011) indicated that the government of the Republic of Namibia requested local populations in the former war zones to come forward with information about other pauper burial sites where PLAN fighters were buried by local people during the war for Namibia's independence. She further pointed out that in some instances, the dead had been known to those who had buried them, whereas, in other instances, their identities - even their assumed war names remained a mystery. Arn Durand (2011)

admitted that sometimes, Koevoet killed SWAPO terrorists and left them at the spot where they fell so that local civilians could bury them. In April 1988, Chris Shipanga of *The Namibian* newspaper reported that residents in Oshushe and Onheleiwa villages near Ondangwa were told by the South African Security Forces to "go and bury your dead SWAPO". This refers to two PLAN combatants who were killed by the South African Security Forces. Vilho Shigwedha (2008) narrated that PLAN combatants who were killed in the clashes with the South African Security Forces at Ondeshifiilwa village in early April 1989 were buried in a shallow mass grave by the local community. Their dead bodies were later exhumed in the presence of United Nations officials to investigate the causes of death before they were again reburied by the local community.

The Oshitudha village also buried a number of PLAN combatants who died in combat with the South African Security Forces. Tresia Nambashu narrated the following experience:

On 25 March 1988, the South African Security Forces killed three PLAN combatants at Oshitudha. Three days after their death they received pauper burials in Oshitudha. In 2002, we donated money to buy coffins for a reburial of the three PLAN combatants in a proper mass grave.



Fig.2. The site of the grave where three unknown PLAN combatants are buried in Oshitudha village. Photograph by the author, 11 March, 2020.

## Transit for exile

David Soggot (1986) narrated the great exodus from some parts of Namibia as men, women, and children left their families, friends, and possessions and headed towards the northern border to cross over on foot into Angola under the cover of night.

According to Niita ya Nakale:

PLAN combatants brought people to my homestead who were fleeing the country to Angola. They spent a couple of days in my homestead while PLAN combatants were surveying the route to Angola, checking whether it was safe from the South African Security Forces. Accommodating them was a huge responsibility because I had to make sure they were fed and their safety was not compromised.

Pinhas Ataleni asserted that:

Oshitudha village was a transit camp for many people who were fleeing the country to Angola. They came to Oshitudha hoping to find PLAN combatants to escort them to SWAPO camps inside Angola. The route that was used stretched from Oshitudha village to Olupaka and Onadhidhi villages from where they had to cross the Namibian border into Angola.

Karangane Karapo and Jeremy Silvester (2016) argued that many local homesteads provided vital help in the form of food, water and temporary accommodation for those en route to exile. Rautia Ndilinawa claimed to have known some individuals who were in transit to exile with PLAN combatants and spent a night in her homestead at Oshitudha in the 1980s. They were Kaapanda Otto, Kolele and Annanis Shikongo. Nevertheless, accommodating civilians who were bound for exile was a risky undertaking. It posed a danger to those who were going into exile as well as to those who were hosting them. Andreas Iiyambo claimed that "members of the South African Security Forces unleashed terror on civilians who aided people who were fleeing the country". Helalia Nakale who was caught by the South African Security Forces accommodating five-exile-bound civilians narrated the following:

PLAN combatants brought seven people from Ongandjera district to my homestead, as they proceeded to survey the safety of the exile route. I took two of them to my neighbor, Kiito ka Shileka. we had to share the burden of accommodating exile-bound refugees because of security reasons, I could not keep many people in my homestead.

More importantly, as Heicke Becker (2011) indicated, civilians also provided PLAN combatants with intelligence information to avoid contact with the SASF. More especially, when PLAN combatants were escorting civilians from northern Namibia to southern Angola. As a matter of fact, several civilians participated in dangerous reconnaissance operations that were used to gather information for PLAN combatants.

Ndilinawa Ndeshitila claimed to have carried out reconnaissance operations for PLAN using his bicycle. Similar claims were made by Fredrick Fillemon who narrated the following:

They dispatched me to various areas in the neighbourhood of Oshitudha village where the South African Security Forces were operating. I checked the numbers of their Casspirs, how many had mounted guns and the type of weapons that they carried. In December 1988, I went to spy on the SASF when they camped near the Oshitudha combined school. They interrogated me about my identity and threatened me with death should I refuse to disclose where I have seen 'SWAPO terrorists'. My reply to them was a 'No'! It was a lucky escape.

Matheus Shimweneni also indicated that he provided intelligence information to PLAN combatants about members of the SASF who were operating in Oshitudha and neighbouring villages. On 17 May 1987, Shimweneni guided PLAN combatants to a homestead in Oshitudha where a Koevoet member, *Ekakunya*, was staying. The mission succeeded by capturing the *Ekakunya* alive. However, members of the SASF were able to rescue him. The following year, in August 1988, Shimweneni escorted PLAN combatants to a *Koevoet* member who was visiting his girlfriend at Oghunga village. What happened to him following his capture by PLAN combatants remains a mystery. Nevertheless, Shimweneni told me that he has "done and seen things that can't be described." Fillemon Fredrick, who accompanied PLAN combatants during their operations in Oshitudha village was open to sharing some experiences of what he witnessed during night operations with PLAN combatants. However, I should adhere to Matheus Shimweneni's stance of keeping mum on some of "these things". They are not for the faint-hearted.

Nevertheless, Simon Kanyala agreed with Matheus Shimweneni, Fredrick Fillemon and Ndilinawa Fillemon that Oshitudha civilians provided intelligence information to

PLAN combatants on numerous occasions. However, Simon Kanyala cautioned that PLAN combatants were careful with who they used to collect information for them. The local population was so intimidated and lived in a state of fear to the extent that many of them were overwhelmed with fear and panic whenever they saw members of the SASF. Therefore, should you send them to spy for you they would betray the mission. Because, as soon as they receive a few slaps from the South African Security Forces they will spill the beans.

## Summary

This chapter presented one of the major findings of the study, which highlighted how Oshitudha civilians' supported PLAN combatants. The chapter explored different ways and methods that the Oshitudha villagers used to support PLAN combatants during the Namibian armed liberation struggle. The support for PLAN fighters included food provision combatants, protection, provision of shelter, transportation, nursing of injured combatants and burials of of some PLAN combatants. This chapter also highlighted the assistance that was given to people fleeing Namibia by Oshitudha civilians and the provision of intelligence information to PLAN combatants.

The next chapter explores the socio-political relations between Oshitudha civilians and PLAN combatants.

## CHAPTER 5: SOCIO-POLITICAL RELATIONS

### Introduction

This chapter explores the socio-political relations between Oshitudha civilians and PLAN combatants. The discussions presented in this chapter are aligned with the objective of the study, which aimed at analyzing the social and political interaction between the local population of Oshitudha village and PLAN combatants. The last section of the chapter analyses conflicts and consequences thereof that developed during the interactions between PLAN combatants and Oshitudha civilians during the armed liberation struggle.

### Social relations with PLAN combatants

According to Brill (2022), war is a social-political phenomenon associated with the fundamental character of relations among states, peoples and nations. This is when the confronting parties stop using nonviolent forms and methods of struggle and start to use weapons and other violent means directly to achieve their political goals. It is against this backdrop that this section examines the social relations between Oshitudha civilians and PLAN combatants. These relations were guided by Oshiwambo cultural norms and traditions, as the following excerpt from the author's interview with Pinehas Ataleni may disclose.

The strong social relations between PLAN combatants and Oshitudha civilians were cemented by the fact that most of PLAN combatants were born in Owamboland. They spoke Oshiwambo dialects such as Oshimbalantu, Oshikwaluudhi, Oshimbandja, Oshikwanyama, Oshikologhadhi, Oshingandjera, Oshikwambi and Oshindonga.

Ataleni further explained that he assisted PLAN combatants the same way he treated his biological children. Similar sentiments were echoed by Magano Alukonga who stated that she treated PLAN combatants as members of her extended family because her two sisters and a brother had also joined SWAPO in Angola. Emilie Taapopi claimed that members of the SASF nicknamed her the "mother of terrorists". This is when they learnt that three of her children: Iiyambo, Ananias, and Anna left home to join SWAPO in exile. Linda Sackaria whose son went into exile and joined PLAN narrated the following:

Seeing PLAN combatants with nothing to eat reminded me about my own son who also left home to become a PLAN combatant. As such I had to give them whatever was available.

I should emphasize here that offering humanitarian assistance to strangers was considered a cultural norm among many Oshiwambo speaking people. To this end, Pinehas Ataleni indicated the following:

Our culture lays emphasis on the importance of sharing and helping those who are in need. This does not mean that assistance should only be given to people that one knows, but to everyone who knocks at your door. Traditionally, a person is also expected to assist the needy without expecting anything in return.

It emerged from the interviews that since PLAN combatants were welcomed and accepted by many in the Oshitudha village, they became part of the village cultural activities and values sharing. According to Abraham Mutumbulwa, PLAN combatants became part of a covert social evening, *Oshungi*, which took place in his homestead. Interestingly, *Ohungi* also created an enabling environment for PLAN combatants to socialize and propose local girls for love. When I interviewed Simon Kanyala, a former PLAN combatant, he affirmed that he had a girlfriend, but he didn't tell anyone,

including his comrades, that he was dating a girl from the Oshitudha village. This secrecy was essentially important to protect her girlfriend from possible dangers, should the SADF get information that she was dating a terrorist. Yet, that did not prevent some PLAN combatants from entering into romantic relationships with local women. Jim Hooper (1988) was amazed to learn that PLAN combatants had active intimate relationships with women girlfriends whilst they were fighting the war. In the case of Oshitudha village, there is evidence of children who were fathered by PLAN combatants during the war for Namibia's independence. For instance, Ausiku Nalimanguluke was born in 1980 in Oshitudha village. His father was a PLAN combatant who is only remembered by his combat name, Nghoshi.

It should be noted here that although PLAN combatants enjoyed a healthy relationship with civilians in Oshitudha, including recorded cases of intimate relations between PLAN combatants and some young women, it remains essential to bring to light that disputes did ensue between Oshitudha civilians and PLAN combatants during the war for Namibia's armed liberation struggle. Loide Ndilinawa told me that although she supported PLAN combatants, she could not trust them because they were soldiers, trained to kill.

Arn Durand (2012), Sisingi Kamongo (2011), and Arn Durand (2011), who were members of the SASF, claimed in their memoirs that PLAN combatants were killing local civilians in the war zone and forcefully driving them into exile. Lennart Bolliger (2018) stated that in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the relationship between PLAN combatants and local population in the war zone was at its lowest point because of the ill-discipline of PLAN cadres. This behavior jeopardized SWAPO's popular support in Owamboland. In Oshitudha village, the source of conflict between PLAN

combatants and Oshitudha civilians was centered on three issues: forcing some locals to go into exile, preventing some locals from going into exile and killing civilians. The killing of Oshitudha civilians by PLAN combatants who were purported to be apartheid collaborators will be discussed in the next chapter.

On Friday, 18 February 1981, just as the Oshitudha primary school was about to close for the weekend, PLAN combatants embarked upon the school. They marched the learners, parent committee and teachers to the Angolan - Namibian border. Abraham Mutumbulwa narrated the commotion that erupted between parents, teachers and PLAN combatants as follows:

Teachers like Fiina Auwanga and Heini Isak were breastfeeding at the time. PLAN combatants declined the request for these teachers to be escorted to their homesteads to pick up their babies. Parents were also against young learners from grades 1 and 2 going into exile. The teachers were also against parents going into exile. As a result, the two breastfeeding teachers and a number of students who were very young were later released and instructed to go home.

The other source of disagreements between Oshitudha civilians and PLAN combatants was the free will of going into exile. The local civilians often made pre-arranged plans with PLAN combatants so that they could organize their journey into exile. However, this was not always the case especially when it involved civilians who were useful to PLAN combatants. For instance, Loide Embula, Matheus Shimweneni, Fredricks Fillemon, Theophilus Junias, Abraham Sikunawa and Iiyambo Andreas, told me that they experienced brutality from the SASF and wanted to go into exile. Unfortunately, they were told by PLAN combatants that they could not go into exile because they were irreplaceable contact persons in Oshitudha. Abraham Sikunawa explained:

Due to constant assaults and imprisonment by the South African security forces, I wanted to go into exile. In 1982, I was imprisoned at Outapi and when I was released from prison in 1984, I told Simon Kanyala that I wanted to go into exile. He refused, saying, 'If I go, who will help PLAN combatants. Just stay and help us,' he said. I never went into exile to escape the brutality of SASF.

Loide Embula also singled out Nekongo Lya Piitela, a PLAN combatant from Oshitudha that prevented her from going into exile in 1987. According to Loide, Nekongo Lya Piitela argued that Oshitudha village could not be empty of civilians because many people wanted to leave the village for exile. Some people needed to stay in Oshitudha village because they were the ones saving the lives of PLAN combatants. Ben Mulongeni and Victor Tonchi (2014) referred to civilians leaving the country in large numbers as an exodus in the 1970s. Young men and women were leaving the country to go into exile in Zambia and later Angola. The militarization of northern Namibia from 1<sup>st</sup> April 1, 1974, which resulted in the beating, abuse, killing, and detention of civilians, motivated many people to leave for exile. Jeremy Silvester, Martha Akawa, and Napandulwe Shiweda (2014) gave the example of Ambrosius Amutenya, who was forced to flee into exile after publishing the kill list of Koevoet in the Omukwetu newspaper.

For PLAN combatants, losing crucial people who were assisting them inside the villages disadvantaged them. They have to start over again, building trust; the same people were secretly passing information to SASF. This increased military presence in Owambo transformed the local way of life, and social life was broken as people were forced to live under constant surveillance. What used to be peaceful and quiet villages were turned into military fortresses, occupied by tanks, armoured personnel carriers, underground bunkers, and thousands of soldiers. All the major towns and lots of

villages had military bases. The villages and locations next to military bases were surrounded by watchtowers, and, with the curfew in place, it was riskier to live next to these places, Martha Akawa (2003).

## Summary

This chapter discussed the socio-political relations between Oshitudha civilians and PLAN combatants. It also demonstrated that Oshitudha civilians were supporters of SWAPO as a liberation movement. The chapter further revealed that Oshitudha civilians were driven to support SWAPO's ideological orientations as a result of the atrocities that were committed against the Oshitudha community by members of the SASF. The last part of the chapter highlighted the conflicts and disagreements that developed between Oshitudha civilians and PLAN combatants. The next chapter explores the atrocities that were committed against Oshitudha civilians during Namibia's liberation struggle.

## CHAPTER 6

### REMEMBERING ATROCITIES

#### Introduction

This chapter presents major findings of the study. Torture, assault, destruction of properties, intimidation, arrests and imprisonments of Oshitudha civilians are the main focus of this chapter. Furthermore, the chapter presents the inhuman display of dead bodies of PLAN combatants on Koevoet combat vehicles as well as dumping dead bodies at schools, Cuca shops and churches. Such practices were inhuman and may constitute war crimes as per Article 7 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which, unfortunately, only came into force in 2002.

#### **Torture**

The SASF committed despicable atrocities against local populations in the war zone. The Namibian newspaper (1985 to 1990) reported candid news of brutal violence committed by members of the South African Security Forces against civilians in the war zone. For instance, on 11 November 1988, Chris Shipanga of the Namibian newspaper reported a gruesome tale of a man, from Ekolo village, northern Namibia, whose ears and lips were cut off before being killed by members of the Police Counter Insurgency Unit (Koevoet). In another horrific report accompanied by graphic photographs, Shipanga also reported that on 4 July 1986, a 13 years old Titus Paulus from Onyaanya village was roasted on fire by members of the SASF. Earlier, on the 13th of June 1986, Shipanga broke another story of a fifteen-year-old, Portius Blasius, from Onhemba village, about 10 kilometers east of Oshitudha, who was badly beaten and his face burned with the exhaust of an idling *Buffel* armed vehicle.

# Youth is 'roasted' over fire in north

BY CHRIS SHIPANGA

AN AMAKALI Primary School student, in northern Namibia has this week accused Security Force members of 'roasting' his back over a fire because of his 'ignorance' of the whereabouts of Swapo guerrillas.

Both the Defence Force and police in Windhoek denied any involvement in the matter, with the latter saying: 'We heard of such a rumour and did send out some men to investigate, but as I say we are just investigating a rumour and I can assure you that it is definitely not the police.'

The boy Titus Paulus, 13, from Onyanya in the Amutse area is presently in the Onandjokwe Lutheran Hospital where he is being treated for serious burns on his back.

In a statement filed with the office of the Chairman of the Owambo Administration, Mr Peter Kalangula, the boy said on June 28, 1986, he went with Hafeni, a friend of his, to a place called Eshindi.

'We were going to fetch another friend of ours Mwuatilifange to come and stay at our place. Shortly on arrival at Mr Uushona Nambonde's house, where Mwuatilifange stays, we heard the roaring of army vehicles coming towards the homestead.

'We noticed several Casspirs stopping next to the kraal with many camouflaged men following our foot prints. They came straight to me and Hafeni and shouted that they have found the terrorists. Many makakanyas seized me and asked me about Swapo guerrillas.

'I told them that I knew nothing about such men, whereupon they accused me of lying. One slapped me in the face and pulled off my jersey to blindfold me while others kicked and pulled my testicles.

'They then carried me into the mahangu field where I was held by my arms and legs over a fire, and they roasted my back for a long time.

'I was screaming out with great

continued on page 2



THE BURNT back of the youth, Titus Paulus.

Fig.3. The news about the roasting of Titus Paulus by members of SASF as reported by Chirs Shipanga. The news appeared on p. 1-2 of *The Namibian newspaper*, 4 July 1986 accompanied by gruesome image of Paulus roasted body. The photograph was taken by John Liebenberg at Onandjokwe hospital where Paulus was hospitalized.



Fig 4: The horrific image of a bruised and burned Portus Blasius, whose face was burned with the exhaust of a Buffel armed vehicle by members of SASF. The photography appeared on page 1 -3 of *The Namibian* 13 June 1986 and page 1 of 18 July 1986. The horrific photography was taken by John Liebenberg at Oshakati hospital, where Blasius was hospitalized.

Manfred Hinz and Nadia Gevers (1989) stated that one of the most common forms of torture that the SASF used against civilians in the war zone was beating. This was done with hands, rifle butts, sticks, poles, branches, bars, rubber tubes, belts, quirts, sjamboks and whips. Tobias Mbako (1987), reporting for *The Namibian* weekly newspaper, stressed a worrying trend of the SASF increasingly making use of machetes and knives when assaulting civilians in northern Namibia. In the article dated 14 August, 1987, Mbako reported that:

Jacob Haindongo, a shopkeeper at Oilyateko in the Ondonga area of Owamboland, was stabbed with a knife in his head and arm by members of the SASF. Haindongo was admitted to the Engela hospital where he received multiple stitches on the head. He suffered terrible pain and lost three teeth as a result of the beatings.

Christophine Ipinge recalled how the SASF, when they learned that she was feeding PLAN soldiers, beat her until she fainted:

They came to my homestead and demanded that I tell them the whereabouts of 'SWAPO terrorists' that I allegedly fed. I was beaten and strangled with a rope and then dragged around my homestead. I was punched, kicked, and beaten with rifle butts. The beating continued until I was unconscious. After beating me and my children, they looted my shop, took all the items, and set the shop alight. Very painfully, I was left with a permanent eardrum damage and lost my right eye.



Fig.5: Christophina Ipinge alias Kiito kwa Ndumba. Doctors at the Oshakati state hospital removed her left eye. This was because of the torture she endured from members of the SASF. Her hearing is impaired as well. One has to shout very loud to be heard by her. Photo taken by the researcher at her homestead in Oshitudha village, 12 December 2020.

Similarly, Matheus Shimweneni narrated that he was tortured by members of the SASF on several occasions. Alukonga Magano who witnessed Shimwefeni's torture narrated, during my interview with him, that the SASF brought Shimweneni to Oshitudha primary school where they paraded him, as if he were a SWAPO terrorist, before the school children and teachers. Another victim of torture, Wilhelm Kaghono, narrated that he was, on several occasions, beaten and left unconscious by members of the SASF. Kaghono pointed out that his first experience of torture was in 1986 when members of the SASF learnt that he used his bicycle to transport a PLAN combatant from Oshitudha to a neighbouring village, Omwifi. Nearly beaten to death, the young Kaghono was left to perish in a pool of blood.

The barbaric torture of young boys from Oshitudha village by members of the SASF was also disclosed in my interview with Magano Abraham, who told me the following:

They suspected that young boys between the age of 14 and 20 were SWAPO terrorists. This placed them at a high risk of being primary targets for torture, killing, disappearance and imprisonment.

Young girls were also not spared from the brutality of the SASF. Abraham Mutumbulwa told me how Nambashu ya Tiofe, who was 11 years old in 1985, was brutally beaten by members of the SASF. Maria Kamati and Mahata Kapweya shared memories of a young woman a young woman, whose name they declined to disclose, was raped by five members of the SASF. After raping her, they inserted beer bottles that they were drinking into her womanhood. Women were raped in the presence of their children. Pregnant women were not spared from this abuse. Phineas Ataleni told me that animals were also not spared from the brutality of members of the SASF. The SASF killed domestic animals on suspicion that local communities slaughtered them to feed PLAN combatants.

## **Destruction of properties**

Properties of civilians were destroyed by members of the SASF. None of the people that I interviewed blamed PLAN combatants for destroying or stealing any of their properties. Manfred Hintz and Nadia Gevers (1989) explained that in the war zone people's homes, land, shops, as well as churches, schools, and clinics, were ruthlessly destroyed by the South African Security Forces. Military vehicles drove through Omahangu fields, crushing crops and causing a loss of agricultural production for communities that were already poor and vulnerable. John Liebenberg and Patricia Hayes (2010) outlined how the SASF drove over local homesteads and crop fields when pursuing PLAN combatants.

Niita ya Nakale still remembers the destruction of her Omahangu field fence in May 1988. This is when three casspirs ran over her fence and created many openings in the fence. Ratia Ndilinawa added the following:

To mentally torture you, members of South African Security Forces could flatten the entire Omahangu fence. In May 1986, they drove through my field and destroyed my produce: beans, water melons, and Omahangu crops.

In this light, Matheus Shimweneni narrated that there were a few permanent fences made of galvanized wires in Oshitudha village. SASF destroyed them constantly, so it was discouraging to fence Omahangu field with galvanized wires. Instead, thorn bushes were used. The Namibian newspaper of 8 April 1988. reported that the headman of Okalumbu village (located in present day Onyaanya Constituency, Oshikoto region), Abner Iitula, lodged a complaint with the office of the Owambo Administration against the Police Counter Insurgency Unit (Koevoet) for destroying his Omahangu field. According to Iitula, Koevoet sowed destruction in his village by also destroying produce in the fields of Sakarias Iimene, Hilma Ita, Thomas Ita and

Martin Shigwedha. He argued that due to poor rainfall that year, many people in the village almost starved to death because the poor harvest they were able to make was destroyed by Koevoet.

Participants claimed that members of the SASF also stole money and looted precious goods from people's homesteads. Christophina Ipinge, Ndilinawa Rautia, Linda Sackaria and Loide Ndilinawa claimed that members of the SASF stole traditional beads and anything valuable from different homesteads in Oshitudha. According to Ndilinawa:

*Koevoet* could order all of us to get out of the homestead. Whilst some of them were interrogating and beating us, others were searching our bedrooms for money. As people usually kept money in tins, the SASF used metal detectors to detect where the money was hidden.

Looting of cuca-shops was not spared either from the SASF acts of terror on civilians. For instance, on Friday, 8 April 1988, *The Namibian* newspaper published a story of Markus Ailenge from Ohama ya Shunda village in northern Namibia, who had his cuca shop ransacked by members of the SASF. They took liquor and cash. They also assaulted him and thereafter parked their armed vehicles under nearby trees, where they drank the looted alcohol. Ailenge sustained serious injuries to his right eye and had two ribs broken. On Friday, 7 October, 1988, Chris Shipanga reported that the police at Ondangwa were investigating the theft of cash amounting to R 600 and a radio cassette player from a civilian by members of the SASF.

#### Intimidation and detention of civilians

Intimidation and detention were some of the atrocities committed against civilians by members of the SASF in Oshitudha. They drove in armed combat vehicles, which Magano Alukonga described as intimidating vehicles: "Whenever you hear excessive noise of a car's engine roaring, you are thrown into a fright of panic and distress." Arn Durad (2011) described the cars as turbocharged diesel engine armed vehicles.

The roaring engine of a casspir can intimidate the enemy and local populations from afar. Moreover, casspirs physical appearance was unattractive, aggressive and very terrifying. Aune Simon pointed out the following:

They took me to a casspir, which was parked in front of the entrance to my homestead. Its look was so intimidating, and it had a machine gun mounted on top of it. A gunner pointed the machine gun at me and shouted that I must tell them where I have seen “the terrorists”. I was very frightened, but chose not to disclose where I have seen PLAN combatants.

Magano Abraham pointed out that members of SASF, especially those who were from Owamboland, disrespected their elders, especially women. Some of them were as young as sixteen years old, but they were not bothered to insult women, some of whom were even older than their mothers. Emilie Taapopi narrated how during their patrol in Oshitudha village, members of SASF threatened to burn her homestead and kill all its residents. In December 1986, after beating Malakia Mutumbulwa into unconsciousness, Koevoet members threw a hand grenade under a marula tree where a centenarian, Kaghono kaKaumbwa (gwaKaumbwa), was sitting. The old woman was covered in a cloud of gas as she pleaded for mercy. She miraculously survived. In addition, civilians were arbitrary arrested by members of the SASF on suspicion of either being PLAN combatants or supporting the military activities of PLAN combatants in Oshitudha village.

David Smut (2019), who was a lawyer in the 1980s and who has been a judge in the Supreme Court of Namibia since 2010, pointed out similar unlawful arrests of civilians across the war zone in northern Namibia. He gave an example of Josef Katofa, who was arrested by members of the SASF and detained for nine months without trial. Manfred Hinz and Nadia Gevers (1989) noted that many people were detained by

South African Security Forces without charge or trial. Because, Act 9 of 1977 gave power to the security forces to detain people suspected of helping SWAPO and held them incommunicado for thirty days. After thirty days, unlimited detention of detainees was authorized by the apartheid cabinet.

Malakia Ndakalako informed me that in August 1981, members of the SASF arrested him. He was found at Omasha cuca shops in Oshitudha village where they tortured and arrested him. He was accused of transporting PLAN combatants from Omikwa ya Nghwi village to Grootfontein and Swakopmund in July 1981. Ndakalako was detained at a military prison in Outapi. His days in detention were marked by daily torture, which included electric shocks and psychological torture. Ndakalako narrated his torture in detention as follows:

I was interrogated every day about the whereabouts of “SWAPO terrorists” that I transported. I was slapped, punched, kicked, shocked with electricity and beaten with hard objects. The SASF also tied my legs and lifted me up with my head facing down. My legs were then tied to something like a pulley for more than an hour. The hanging of my body upside down forced my tongue out of my mouth. When they untied me, I could not even stand. I fell to the ground. Then, they asked me if I could disclose where the terrorists that I transported to Swakopmund and Grootfontein were. They accused me of being a terrorist. I maintained my innocence during the entire detention, which lasted for four months. I told the interrogators that I could not give them information about the terrorists because I had not met them or assisted them. I was interrogated in the morning and in the afternoon. The morning interrogations usually ended with a very disturbing statement: ‘We will kill you in the afternoon’.

Due to the continued cycle of torture and interrogation in detention, Ndakolo’s head got swollen so badly and his left eye could not open because of constant beatings. His jaws were also dislocated and he could not eat without any assistance. When Koevoet realised that he could die at any moment without releasing any information, they

dumped him at the Finnish missionaries' hospital in Onakayale, where he spent a month before returning home when he had fully recovered.

### **Civilians killing**

Both SASF and PLAN soldiers accused each other of the killing of local civilians in the war zone. Arn Durand (2011) admitted that Koevoet killed supporters of SWAPO and purposely blamed SWAPO fighters. An article by Chris Shipanga of *The Namibian Newspaper* on 3 June 1988, investigated the killing of Raphael Aimbili at Ombafi village, Ombalantu, in northern Namibia. The SASF accused SWAPO soldiers of killing Aimbili. However, eyewitnesses disputed that it was not PLAN combatants who killed Aimbili.

In total three civilians were confirmed abducted and killed by members of the SASF in Oshitudha village during the Namibian liberation war. These were Ruben Edmud, who was killed in 1984, Sackaria Shimukwa, killed in 1986 and Caleb Shikale, killed in 1987. Edmund was shot dead in April 1984 as he tried to run away from members of the SASF because he always panicked whenever he saw them. His body was displayed on Casspir's mudguard as a trophy. Caleb Shikale was arrested and detained at Outapi military camp where he was murdered by members of the SASF. His body was not given to his family and what happened to it remains a mystery to this day. Christophina Ipinge claimed that Sackaria Shimukwa was arrested and interrogated by members of the SASF about the whereabouts of PLAN combatants. They concluded that Shimukwa was a SWAPO terrorist and killed him.

### **Killing of civilians by PLAN combatants**

Participants in this study revealed that PLAN combatants also killed civilians in Oshitudha who were suspected of collaborating with the SASF. The researcher was shown two graves belonging to victims of PLAN combatants in the Oshitudha village. Their names are Frans Shapumba Ipinge and Bernadette Nashilongo Mbendeka who were killed in 1985. Another victim of PLAN combatants was Talimbwangula Johannes, who was abducted from his homestead at night in April 1986 by PLAN combatants, who executed him in the area of Uukolonkadhi district. Johannes was buried by civilians in Omaumba village. PLAN fighters also murdered Mukanga Shileka in Onaholongo village. His body was recovered by Onaholongo civilians who buried at the spot where he was killed. According to Norma Kriger (1988), in many areas, but not all, guerrillas soon abandoned trying to mobilise the local population in Zimbabwe around traditional leaders because either they chose to collaborate with security forces or they were pressured to give up information about the presence of the guerrillas. Either way, they were unreliable. Guerrillas were correctly suspicious and killed many chiefs and headmen. Locals who were hostile to the traditional leaders took advantage of the security situation to label them informers and draw a response from the guerrillas.



Fig.6 Sikunawa Abraham's mahangu field in Oshitudha village hosts the grave of the late Frans Shapumba Ipinge, who was executed by PLAN combatants in 1985. He was accused by PLAN combatants and some Oshitudha civilians of spying for the SASF. His body was in a decomposed state when villagers buried it in a shallow grave. PLAN combatants cut his throat and left him without informing Oshitudha civilians, who initial thought he was abducted to Angola. Photo taken by the researcher, March 12, 2020, at Oshitudha village.



Fig.7 Bernadette Nashilongo Mbendeka was accused of collaborating SASF against PLAN combatants. PLAN combatants shot her dead when she attempted to escape an arrest. However, the claim that Mbendeka was a South African collaborator has been appears fabricated. Ndilinawa Rautia explained that there was no evidence whatsoever to prove that she was a collaborator. Isack Heini pointed out that a fellow Oshitudha civilian who was on bad terms with Mbendeka used PLAN combatants to eliminate her. Photo taken by the researcher on 20 March 2020, at Oshitudha village.

## Displaying dead bodies

Throughout the war of the liberation struggle in Namibia, members of the SASF, especially Koevoet, displayed dead bodies of alleged PLAN combatants on their military vehicles. Sisingi Kamongo (2012), an ex-Koevoet member, explained that dead bodies were displayed on military vehicles due to inadequate space inside the vehicles. He further revealed that the main purpose of displaying dead PLAN insurgents was to intimidate SWAPO supporters and sympathizers. Kamongo and his

team would drive past the huts and kraals, brandishing the AKs, SKSs, and RPGs above their heads on top of the casspirs. Ruben Auwanga believed that by displaying dead bodies on Casspirs, members of the SASF were trying to discourage Oshitudha civilians from supporting PLAN combatants. He recalled how in November 1987, members of the SASF came from northern Oshitudha with five Casspirs, each with dead bodies, bedridden with bullets and tied to mudguards. The bodies had open wounds everywhere: I could hardly look at them and identify the dead bodies. Yet, members of the SASF forced Auwanga to inspect the dead bodies of what they called Auwanga's brothers.

The inhumane display of deceased PLAN combatants in northern Namibia caught the attention of *The Namibian Newspaper*. On January 16, 1987, its headline read, "The parade of death". This was accompanied by a photo of an alleged dead PLAN combatant tied to a spare wheel of a Casspir. Nevertheless, as Gwen Lister (2021), the editor of the *Namibian newspaper* at that time, put it, the SASF denied reports that they were strapping the bodies of PLAN combatants to their Casspirs armoured vehicles and parading them through settlements in Owamboland.

### **False guerrillas**

False guerrillas were members of the SASF who pretended to operate as PLAN combatants in Oshitudha village and the entire war zone. According to Arn Durand (2012), SASF units, especially Koevoet, utilized this psychological warfare on civilians in attempts to gather intelligence information on civilians who were feeding and giving money to PLAN combatants. Oswin Namakalu (2004) explained that false guerrillas caused considerable confusion among the local population, who often found it hard to determine who the real PLAN combatants were. False guerrillas posed as

PLAN combatants, wearing the same uniforms and carrying the same weapons as PLAN combatants. They also used the same tactical methods and approaches as genuine PLAN combatants, which caused confusion and suspicion even among the freedom fighters themselves.

When I interviewed Ruben Auwanga in 2021, he explained that false guerrillas complicated the assistance that PLAN combatants were receiving from Oshitudha civilians. For instance, in January 1986, false guerrillas came to Auwanga's homestead asking for food and information about the enemy. Auwanga noticed that they were not genuine PLAN combatants and informed them that there was no Omahangu flour in the homestead and that his wife had taken sick children to the hospital. Thereafter, they asked Auwanga to give them money. He refused, by explaining to them that he could not keep money with him at home as doing so was unsafe because of the war. Auwanga also expressed that the killing of civilians during the liberation struggle, which is being blamed on PLAN combatants, is quite problematic. Because some of the killings were done by these false guerrillas.

### Summary

In brief, this chapter presented the atrocities that were committed against Oshitudha civilians by members of the South African Security Forces and, to some extent, PLAN combatants. Atrocities explored in the chapter include torture, assault, intimidation, detention and disappearance of civilians from Oshitudha. The chapter further elaborated on the destruction of the properties of Oshitudha civilians and reprisal actions taken by members of the SASF whenever they suffered losses. The killing of Oshitudha civilians by the warring parties was also discussed. The last part of the chapter discussed the inhumane display of dead bodies of PLAN combatants by SASF and the

impact of false guerrillas in the Oshitudha village during the Namibian armed liberation struggle. The next chapter will discuss and analyse the findings of the study. This chapter will also conclude the study and provides recommendations.

## CHAPTER 7

### Discussion, analysis, conclusion and recommendations

#### Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of the role played by Oshitudha civilians during the Namibian liberation struggle, the reign of terror that ravaged the village, and the coping mechanisms that Oshitudha civilians employed to survive the war. Furthermore, resolution 435, the recognition of civilians as war veterans, and the success of the armed liberation struggle are added subject matters of this chapter. The last part of this chapter will conclude the study and offer recommendations for further studies. All these sub-themes will be discussed in line with the objectives of the study, the literature reviewed, and the theories that guided the researcher throughout the study.

#### The role of Oshitudha women

Tessa Cleaver and Marion Wallace (1990) pointed out that without women's support for SWAPO guerrillas, their activity inside Namibia would have been impossible. The findings of this study support Tessa Cleaver and Marion Wallace's argument. After listening to the narratives of Oshitudha women, I came to the conclusion that women in the war zone were the backbone and heart of the Namibian armed liberation struggle. Women from Oshitudha carried out acts of bravery and heroism, which I believe should be closely analyzed. They fed, sheltered, and shielded PLAN combatants from SASF. Similarly, they provided First Aid to injured PLAN combatants.

The above mentioned activities were necessitated by what Norman Kriger (1992) described as guerrilla's dependency on the large female population to whom they communicated the purpose of waging guerilla warfares. Citing Zimbabwe's liberation

struggle and the Mau Mau rebellion in Kenya, Ebitimi Kombo (2012) posits that men were forced into urban waged labour and women became the most oppressed members of societies. In rural areas, women were subjugated under the rural patriarchies and treated mercilessly by colonial officers. In the case of women in northern Namibia, they suffered similar fates as experienced by women in rural Zimbabwe and Kenya. The colonial policies of Apartheid created a situation where women had a larger representation and presence than men in northern Namibia. Firstly, the Bantu Homeland Act of 1970 prevented women from leaving Owamboland and thus confined them to their respective villages. Secondly, the majority of men from Owamboland spent twelve months or more in central and southern Namibia on the contract labour system (Hishongwa, 1992). Women were left in charge of homesteads while their husbands faced inhuman exploitation under the unpopular contract labour system in Namibia. As a result of the contract labour system, women outnumbered men in Owamboland and, they were often the only fully active civilians in the war zone.

The table below, generated by Kletus Likuwa (2012), shows the numbers of contract labourers from 1924 to 1959. Likuwa used archival records from SWANLA and the colonial administration to prove that up to 90% of contract labourers were Aawambo.

Year	Kavangoland	Owamboland
1924	346	3,273
1925	243	3,269
1926	355	4,033
1941	639	4,060
1942	351	3,137

1943	539	6,659
1959	1,033	14,960

Fig.8 Composition of contract labourers in southern Namibia (Kletus Likuwa, 2012).

In 1970, women in Owamboland, aged between 15 and 59, outnumbered men by almost two to one: So the mother stayed home, cultivated the field, held the household together, and bore the brunt of Koevoet (Dennis Herbstein and John Evenson, 1989)). If PLAN combatants were to be fed, clothed, and protected from SASF, women did it with bravery and determination. I believe that without women's contributions, PLAN combatants would not have operated in Oshitudha at all. Very importantly, women in Oshitudha identified with PLAN combatants because many of their own sons had left home to join SWAPO in exile. They saw PLAN combatants as their own children fighting to free them from the brutality of the SASF. Ellen Namhila (2009) explained that when PLAN combatants arrived in northern Namibia, women felt that it was their duty as mothers to look after them. In Oshiwambo culture, one of the key roles of a woman is to feed the family and the entire community in general. Cooking for PLAN combatants was entirely carried out by women, as per Oshiwambo cultural norms. Women prepared and delivered food to PLAN combatants, and occasionally mothers would send their children, both boys and girls, into the bush to deliver food to PLAN combatants. During curfew hours, women did not stop cooking and delivering food to PLAN fighters.

When I interviewed Aune Ilonga, she narrated that she was obliged by motherhood obligation as an Oshiwambo cultural norm to take care of PLAN combatants. She felt it was her responsibility to feed, protect, and assist her "children", PLAN combatants. David Saggot (1986) explained the motherhood obligation of women in northern

Namibia by pointing out that they looked at PLAN combatants as suffering members of their extended families. Thus, without humanitarian assistance from women, SWAPO would have no history of a triumphant armed struggle, not just in Oshitudha village where the study was conducted, but in the entire war zone that covered northern Namibia.

Names of some strong, courageous, fearless, and brave women who faced the brutality of the SASF in Oshitudha village were revealed to the researcher during the interviews. According to Abraham Mutumbulwa, Kano kaNamutuwa and Niita ya Nakale were some of the women who were “strong as bulls”. They stood firm and questioned members of the SASF whenever they were terrorizing Oshitudha civilians in their presence. Both women had several records of fist fights with members of the SASF. The late Kano kaNamutuwa, for instance, had a fight with a member of the SASF whom she threw into a camelthorn shrub. What irked women from Oshitudha village to have physical fights with members of SASF? The answer is simple: it was caused by the SASF habit of beating up civilians in the war zone without established evidence that civilians did actually support PLAN combatants.

## Brothers against brothers

Arn Durand (2011), a white member of Koevoet from South Africa, observed that ninety percent of both Koevoet and PLAN soldiers were from Owamboland. Durand argued that,

politically, we could justify helping the Aawambo people defend their country (Owamboland) against the evil communist infiltrators from southern Angola. It was better to help the good Aawambo people kill the bad Aawambo people.

This unfortunate situation was a result of oppressive colonial apartheid laws in Namibia, which forced many black Namibians to join either SASF or PLAN. SWAPO of Namibia (1981) argues that the economic state affairs in colonial Namibia was designed in accordance with the social interests of the white settlers and international monopoly capitalism. Africans who never benefited from the economy were employed in menial jobs in government and the exploitative contract labour system. Yet finding employment was a lengthy and timid process. Ruben Auwanga informed me during interviews that many contract labourer hopefuls were rejected at the office of the South West Africa Native Labour Association (SWANLA) at Ondangwa, northern Namibia, where they were recruited. Thus, the only available job opportunity was to join SASF.

Nevertheless, the rejection of youths seeking employment under SWANLA was a deliberate exercise to force them to join SASF. Denis Herbstein and John Eveson (1989) claim that Koevoet recruited almost exclusively from among the Aawambo and from the less numerous Kavangos. In theory, blacks from other ethnic groups in Namibia as well as from South Africa were often refused to join SASF. They were rejected because they did not know the local customs and language spoken in the war zone - northern Namibia. Moreover, Aawambo were the best trackers and were very useful in tracking PLAN spoor, according to Arn Durand (2011). Due to poverty and unemployment, many young people from northern Namibia ended up joining SASF. With racial segregation and pass laws in place, young men from northern Namibia could not easily leave the north to find work in southern Namibia. As a result, many of them ended up joining apartheid 63 South African forces in Namibia.

SWAPO, on the other hand, relied on the people from Owamboland for all kinds of support. Hence its armed wing, PLAN, was mainly made up of Aawambo for several

reasons. Firstly, Owamboland was home to SWAPO's primary support base which made up half of the country's population. Secondly, the majority of SWAPO leaders came from Owamboland, hence the support for SWAPO was immense among Aawambo. In the 1970s and 1980s, many young people were tired of apartheid policies, and they were leaving Owamboland in record numbers to join SWAPO in exile. Many young people hoped to get education abroad since they had to flee from the inferior Bantu system of education that apartheid South Africa implemented for black Namibians. However, Samson Ndeikwiila (2014) narrated how many students were fleeing into exile with hopes of furthering their studies abroad, but as soon as they arrived in SWAPO camps, they were sent for military training. Ndapuka Abraham corroborated Ndeikwila's claim when he told me that the majority of young men from Owamboland who fled the country wished to study but ended up with military training and were sent back to the war zone.

Whilst many civilians from Oshitudha village fled the country to join SWAPO, the SASF, on the other hand, conscripted civilians from Oshitudha village to fight against PLAN inside Namibia and across the Namibian border. John ya Palangi recalled how brothers were fighting and killing each other during the war for Namibia's independence. Ndakalako Bathromeu is a classic example. He was a member of the SASF stationed at Tsandi military base, 20 kilometers south of Oshitudha village. This was while two of his nephews, Iikuu Mulenga and Amunyela Mulenga, joined SWAPO and became PLAN combatants. As a PLAN combatant, between 1979 and 1982, Iikuu operated in Oshitudha village. Meanwhile, Ndakalako's daughter, Christophina Ndakalako, fled to Angola and joined SWAPO in 1981. His son, Theophilus Ndakalako, joined Koevoet when his attempt to seek employment in the contract labor system failed. The turning of brothers against brothers caused rifts and

conflicts among many family circles in Oshitudha village. The fact that members of the SASF were very cruel against civilians, it increased local support for PLAN combatants. As Arn Durand (2012) put it, black Koevoet members were hated by the local population in the warzone. PLAN combatants, on the other hand, were given all the support that Oshitudha civilians could afford.

## Terrorizing with impunity

Violence against civilians was legalized in the war zone when the apartheid parliament passed the Internal Security Act 74 of 1982. This Act allowed the SASF to kill civilians with impunity. Nevertheless, to put things in historical perspective, Vilho Shigwedha (2018), argued that the dynamics of state-sponsored violence in Namibia started with Imperial Germany establishing and consolidating the political and economic autonomy of white settlers in the central and southern parts of Namibia. The German policies of repression and the forced removal of Africans from their ancestral land culminated in the 1904–1908 genocide of the Herero and Nama people, the first genocide of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Shigwedha further posits that SWAPO's subsequent launch of the Namibian armed liberation struggle in 1966 turned northern Namibia into a combat zone until 1989, with the South African Defence Force (SADF) attempting to eradicate PLAN. Shigwedha's article is important as it discloses that violence in northern Namibia during the war for independence was state-sponsored against civilians. Participants in my study informed me that when they were assaulted by members of the SASF, they avoided visiting nearby state hospitals at Onesi, Tsandi and Outapi. Wilhelm Kaghono, Loide Embula, and Ndakalako Mutumbulwa explained that members of the SASF

would pull out tortured civilians from hospitals and torture them again since they were suspected of assisting terrorists.

White members of the SASF, such as Arn Durand and others, were aware of the Internal Security Act 74 of 1982, which they used to commit extreme violence against civilians in the war zone. They knew that they could not be prosecuted by the apartheid government that they served. Therefore, they prioritized ruthless interrogation, torture, and the killing of civilians who were suspected of aiding PLAN fighters. The brutality against civilians was so rife that many Namibians who managed to flee Namibia into Zambia and Angola were attacked and killed in mass numbers by the SASF. Vilho Shigwedha (2017) details how SASF massacred Namibian refugees at Cassinga on May 4, 1978. Those who survived this massacre were left with irreparable physical and emotional injuries. So, Namibians whether they were in the war zone or in refugee camps in neighbouring countries that hosted them experienced untold terror that the SASF unleashed on them.

Testimonies presented by ex-members of the SASF associated their actions with acts of bravery and heroism. For instance, Arn Durand, who published three consecutive memoirs in 2011, 2012, and 2019, showed no remorse for the brutality that Koevoet inflicted on civilians in the war zone. Yet, when viewed from a different perspective, it can be argued that killing civilians and achieving the highest kill ratio on the scoreboard are not associates of bravery and heroism, but acts of lawlessness and terrorism. The atrocities that were committed against civilians in the war zone, some of which I presented in chapter 6 of this study, questioned the heroic narratives of the SASF. How could the torture of children, for example, the roasting of Titus Paulus on fire and the burning of Portus Blasius with a casspir's exhaust, be quantified as heroism? In his 2011 memoir, Arn Durand admits that if a civilian was killed in the

crossfire, the SASF often claimed it as a kill, provided they carried enemy weapons with them. It was, therefore, a good idea to keep one or two unrecorded AKs or an SKS, that they can use as evidence that they killed a SWAPO terrorist.

The possession of illegal rifles proves that Koevoet killed civilians intentionally. This was actually a war crime, and in accordance with the international laws, the perpetrators of such crimes could have been prosecuted. The American Red Cross (2011) explains that civilians in areas of armed conflict and occupied territories are protected by Article 159 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Specific provisions include Article 13 and 32 which articulate that civilians are to be protected from murder, torture, or brutality and from discrimination on the basis of race, nationality, religion, or political opinion. The apartheid government and its security forces were racists who regarded black Africans as inferior to whites. It was this pathological obsession with racial superiority that members of the SASF, both whites and black soldiers, committed untold atrocities against people of the black skin in the war zone.

The disregard for black lives coupled with what Sisingi Kamongo (2011) termed “head money”, which was paid to members of SASF per number of killed PLAN combatants, motivated this unethical and barbaric act of killing prisoners of war. I should point out here that the everyday reign of terror in northern Namibia began in 1979 when Koevoet was formed. Between 1979 and 1990, unspeakable atrocities against civilians were committed by members of SASF, with Koevoet being the most notorious unit. It killed, tortured, humiliated, intimidated, and destroyed the properties of civilians in the war zone. Participants that I interviewed noted that it was Koevoet who that made their lives more miserable during the war. The reign of terror in northern Namibia continued unabated due to what Peter Vale (2014) described as Koevoet’s culture of violence. All participants in the interviews informed me, during interviews, that Koevoet would

not question civilians without beating them. They would not take a no answer from the people that they interrogated to provide them with intelligence information.

Similarly, PLAN combatants also killed so-called apartheid puppets. In fact, the number of civilians killed by PLAN combatants in Oshitudha outnumbers the number of civilians killed by SASF in the same village. There are two graves of suspected apartheid puppets in Oshitudha village (see figures 4 and 5), along with two more civilians from Oshitudha who were abducted from their homesteads and killed outside the Oshitudha village. The killing of civilians sent a clear message to Oshitudha civilians that PLAN combatants were in control of the village and not the SASF. The killing of civilians by PLAN also cemented their support among Oshitudha civilians and sent out a clear message that civilians who harbored any idea of supporting SASF would have their throats cut.

Herbert Karapo and Jeremy Sylvester (2016) explained that PLAN combatants rightfully killed civilians who supported the SASF in order to protect themselves. However, it should be noted that the act of killing “apartheid puppets” created another terror of its own. When I interviewed Isack Heini, he told me that civilians who were on bad terms with each other used PLAN combatants to try and settle their differences. This meant that innocent civilians were killed by PLAN combatants. Therefore, the “rightful killing” of civilians that Karapo and Sylvester claimed is thus problematic and contestable. When I interviewed Gideon Ishitile, an ex-PLAN combatant, he admitted that the issue of killing puppets or collaborators with the apartheid government was an unfortunate scenario. He blames civilians for using PLAN combatants to settle their conflicts.

Explaining the horrific environment that civilians found themselves in during the war, Loide Ndilinawa pointed out that “the gun does not release water but fire!” This implies that even though they supported SWAPO and its PLAN combatants, it did not mean that PLAN combatants’ guns could not kill civilians. The fear of being killed by PLAN was more terrifying than being physically tortured by SASF. Sisingi Kamongo (2011) asked: "would you rather face the bonnet of SWAPO guerrillas or the rifle butt of a policeman?" Civilians in Oshitudha were thus embroiled in a circle of violence by trying to appease both PLAN and SASF soldiers: They were tortured badly should they refuse to reveal the whereabouts of PLAN combatants. And, should they tell the SASF about the whereabouts of PLAN combatants, they were labeled as apartheid puppets and targeted for killing or kidnapping. This reign of terror plummeted northern Namibia into a theatre of terror against civilians by both belligerents.

## Defying the curfew

Denis Herbestein and John Everson (1989) wrote that curfew was enforced by SASF in 1979 in northern Namibia as SWAPO military activities intensified in that part of the country. When the curfew was in effect, PLAN combatants continued to move around Oshitudha and surrounding villages at night. They visited homesteads at night in search of food and shelter. Similarly, the curfew did not prevent Oshitudha civilians from transporting PLAN combatants with bicycles or their motor cars. PLAN combatants also continued to attend *Eeshungi* (social evenings) during the curfew hours. This implies that it was extremely difficult to prevent the movement of PLAN combatants in the warzone. Because, SASF had no sufficient troops to patrol the entire war zone and enforce tight curfew measures in the area. Furthermore, the SASF risked ambushes by PLAN combatants if they patrolled the war zone at night. Arn Durand (2011) agrees that under the cover of darkness, PLAN combatants would have an

advantage over SASF if they bumped into them. Thus, it was challenging for the SASF to carry out night patrols to suppress the movement of PLAN combatants. Similarly, many civilians were successful in defying the curfew and assisting PLAN combatants due to the lack of night patrols by the SASF.

The second reason that resulted in the SASF's failure to enforce the curfew and prevent the movement of PLAN combatants in the war zone was the Namibian-Angolan border. This vast space, which Hidipo Hamutenya (2014) claims to cover more than 1,376 kilometers common border, extends from the Atlantic Ocean in the east to the Zambezi River in the west. Moreover, families and communities in southern Angola and northern Namibia share resources, language and cultural practices. For the SASF, manning and patrolling the Angolan-Namibian border was practically a huge challenge. To succeed, they needed more military equipment and more soldiers. Meanwhile, PLAN combatants were infiltrating the war zone through this porous border and moving into villages such as Oshitudha, where civilians were prepared to assist them. This study has established that there were no civilians from Oshitudha killed for violating the curfew. Nevertheless, the curfew had a negative impact on food production in Oshitudha village. Because, people were not allowed to cultivate before sunrise or after sunset. Truly, as Denis Herbestein & John Everson (1989) explain, the summer sowing and the autumn harvest, when the whole family worked feverishly till after dark, were now occasions fraught with danger. I believe that the curfew was used by the SASF as a weapon to reduce food production in northern Namibia, a situation that would disadvantage PLAN combatants should civilians produce less food. In addition to using the curfew as a weapon to create food shortage and insecurity, the SASF deliberately destroyed other supplementary food sources such as *Omuve* - Bird plum and *Omwandi* - Jackalberry (also called African ebony) trees whose sweet fruits

are valuable to livelihoods, especially during droughts in northern Namibia. *The Namibian Newspaper* of 12 September 1986 reported that in September 1986, three religious leaders in northern Namibia, Bishop Kleopas Dumeni, James Kauluma, and Bonifatious Haushiku, took a legal action against the apartheid South African ministry of defense and Namibia's interim government to put an end to the dust-to-dawn curfew in northern Namibia, (*The Namibian* ,12 September 1986).

## Winning the war

Lyall and Wilson III, as quoted in Eric Jardine (2014), explained why some insurgent groups win wars and others lose. They assumed that the local population has to be supportive of the insurgency if insurgents were to win the war. Since the people do not reject the insurgency, the counterinsurgency is starved of information and becomes less effective. Similarly, Arn Durand (2011) proclaimed that it is always the local population that ultimately determines the outcome of the war. The findings of this study reveal that PLAN combatants were able to carry out guerrilla operations inside Namibia, ambushing SASF and attacking their bases for a period that spanned over two decades. The SASF was losing soldiers in combat with SWAPO guerrillas, who depended on civilians for intelligence information, food supplies and transport.

Sisingi Kamongo (2011), Arn Durand (2011), and Arn Durand (2012), however, praised Koevoet as a highly effective unit that killed many SWAPO terrorists during the war. Yet, the SASF, with all its resources, could not defeat PLAN combatants who were trekking long distances from their bases in Angola to carry out military operations inside Namibia. Oswin Namakalu (2004) listed battles, ambushes, skirmishes, and a number of attacks that PLAN combatants carried out on SASF military bases inside Namibia. Arguably, assaulting enemy military targets did not

give PLAN guerilla fighters an upper hand over the conventional South African Defence Force, the best-equipped army in Africa at the time. Nevertheless, claims of successes of PLAN combatants against the SASF can be attributed to what Sinno Abdulkader (2008) termed provision of sanctuary which provided safety for a rebel group. Northern Namibia, especially Owamboland, was a sanctuary for PLAN combatants who were supported by the local civilian population to fight the SASF. Also, the MPLA government in Angola granted PLAN combatants the permission to set up bases in southern Angola, which shares borders with northern Namibia.

According to Sinno Abdulkader (2008), the success or failure of a rebel group depends on the presence or absence, respectively, of sanctuary for an insurgency in a state neighboring a conflict area. Sanctuary in neighboring states provides a haven for insurgents. Unlike states, which are often constrained by the juridical limits of national boundaries, many rebel groups are not. By hiding in neighboring states that are either supportive or neutral, a rebel group enjoys more safety than would likely be the case if the base area were established within the geographical boundaries of the state that is being challenged. Idean Salehyan (2007) posits that insurgent groups are given the leisure to plan, organize, mobilize resources, and recover from counterinsurgent offensives in this relatively safe sanctuary. Each of these features, alone or in combination, presumably increased the odds that PLAN combatants were successful in fighting the SASF.

## **Deconstructing Namibia's Liberation: A Population vs. Enemy-Centric Approach**

In David Soggot's (1986) views, Namibia has a violent heritage. He came to this conclusion by putting forward a deep exploration of the historical context of violence in Namibia, encompassing various aspects such as colonialism, apartheid, resistance movements, and the Namibian War of Independence. The findings of this study indicate that the population-centric approach and the enemy-centric approach were utilised by the SASF to fight against PLAN combatants in Oshitudha village. The population-centric approach failed to yield results for SASF, and the enemy-centric approach was used in an effort to contain PLAN combatant movements in northern Namibia. This section will deliberate on the use of these two approaches.

The Winning Hearts and Minds (WHAM) was an element of the population-centric approach that the SASF utilized in northern Namibia. Participants in this study elaborated witnessing this campaign in Oshitudha village. According to Eloff De Visser (2011), the SASF introduced a comprehensive programme for Winning Hearts and Minds (WHAM) to attempt to win the support of the local population – although at the time; they used expressions such as Kompos (communications operations) or Ploeg en Plant (Plow and Plant). For example, in an effort to create a more positive image for the soldiers deployed in northern Namibia, 76 SADF national servicemen were deployed to black schools on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1977, and the programme continued for the number of years, Geldenhuys Jannie (2009). Furthermore, according to Oswin Namakalu (2004), the SASF launched propaganda campaigns, formed civic or social organisations, and undertook a number of image-building initiatives starting in 1977. SASF was being stationed in South Africa at public service institutions such

as hospitals, schools, and agricultural units. This action was taken in an attempt to gain the cooperation and support of the local populace, isolate SWAPO from Namibians, especially in the country's more populous areas, and fortify the separatist ethnic administrations that the regime had erected in Owambo in 1973 and in Kavango and Zambezi in 1976. That tactical approach aimed to win the fight against SWAPO with a 20% chance of success and 80% of the people's support.

Heini Isak told me that the school was built in 1977 as a goodwill gesture by the apartheid government in Oshitudha village. She also brought up the old age pension that the South African government provided to its elderly citizens during the apartheid era, which she felt was meant to sway public opinion in favour of the SASF. When Magano Alukonga was a student at Oshitudha Combined School, she claims that certain SASF units, like SADF, made pleasant gestures towards her. They occasionally distributed sweets to her and her friends when they met them on the way to school. She was then urged to report PLAN combatants whenever they visited her homestead. The population in the operational zone was encouraged to cooperate with monetary rewards. According to Eloff De Visser (2011), a poster of the time lists the rewards as R5000 for an RPG launcher, R2000 for information leading to the capture of a SWAPO insurgent, R1000 for a landmine, R500 for an AK47, R100 for a mortar bomb, R100 for a hand grenade, and R100 for a jumping-jack anti-personnel mine.



Fig.9 A SASF

propaganda poster written in Oshiwambo. The poster translate; help the national defence force to free you from SWAPO. Report PLAN combatants and you will be rewarded with money. Source: tradition, family and property. TFP Bureau Johannesburg: Young South Africans for a Christian Civilisation

Jeremy Silvester, Martha Akawa & Napandulwe Shiweda (2014), argues that the population centric strategy failed because the attempts to introduce reforms or present South Africa's armed forces as a positive presence were contradicted by the repressive security legislation that was enforced and the coercive actions of particularly Koevoet. As Malakia Ndakalako made it clear,

One of the main causes of Oshiwambo residents' inability to support SASF like PLAN troops was Koevoet. He clarified that when a civilian was assaulted by Koevoet and transported to the hospital Koevoet would follow the victim the following day to the hospital in search of the SWAPO terrorist who

had been brought there to be arrested or assaulted once more.

Malakia Ndakalako contends that Oshitudha citizens occasionally evaluate torture victims and determine whether to transport them to a hospital or allow them to recover at home. Additionally, Andreas Iiyambo revealed that *Omakakunya* frequently questioned residents of villages like Oshitudha about PLAN soldiers in hospitals located in Tsandi, Onesi, and Outapi. Heni Isak goes on to say that even though the apartheid government established the schools, *Omakakunya* made the Oshitudha school a terrifying environment for students. They routinely dumped PLAN fighters' dead bodies to show that they were winning the war and deter students from fleeing into exile. Moreover, they frequently conducted raids on the school, claiming to be searching for SWAPO terrorists, detained a few students, and brought them to the nearby *oshana* to be beaten. The attempts to win over the hearts and minds of the residents of Oshitudha hamlet were hindered by such actions. Ruben Auwanga and Pinhas Ataleni argued that SADF was also killing villagers' livestock. The SADF had been trained to win over hearts and minds yet SADF was viewed as equally evil as Koevoet.

Jeremy Silvester, Martha Akawa, and Napandulwe Shiweda (2014) explained that Koevoet operated in highly mobile units. The draconian powers of security legislation to detain and question people in Namibia were regularly used by this counter-insurgency police unit, particularly in northern Namibia, to disrupt political activities and obtain information about the movement of PLAN combatants inside Namibia. Thus, Koevoet opted for an enemy-centric approach, which made them ruthless against civilians and PLAN combatants. Koevoet wanted to defeat SWAPO, but even though they could not stop PLAN combatants from operating in northern Namibia, they succeeded in containing them. Civilians who were arrested by Koevoet in Oshitudha,

for example, Sikunawa Abraham, Ndilinawa Fillemon, and Fredricks Mutumbulwa, were aiding PLAN combatants. They narrated the horrific treatment they received, as expressed by Peter Katjavivi (1985), who argued that detainees were held incommunicado, so families remained uninformed about the fate of those arrested for a limitless period of time and there were repeated allegations of torture including water boarding, beatings and use of electric shock. Hence, Oshitudha civilians were at odds with SAF, which they could not support. The findings of this study reveals that Oshitudha civilians were prevented from supporting SASF by one factor; PLAN combatants would execute anyone suspected of corroborating with the enemy. On the other hand, Iita Petrus explained that those who supported SASF secretly in Oshidha was a result of torture and beating that they received. at the Jeremy Silvester, Martha Akawa & Napandulwe Shiweda (2014) quoted Bishop Dumeni , the former head of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia who remembered the display of the bodies of dead PLAN combatants to communities as a particular counterproductive tactic used by the security forces particularly Koevoet during the 1980s. Kamongo argues that the display meant to send a message to SWAPO supporters was entirely just confirming that they were brutal animals , Durand As Dumeni argued in Jeremy Silvester, Martha Akawa & Napandulwe Shiweda (2014),the display of bodies was primarily display of power aimed at intimidating local residents but instead, that families were angered.

In Oshitudha, this intimidation radicalized the people to support PLAN combatants. The weakening of the enemy as quick as possible as advised by the enemy centric theory was thus difficult to achieve as Oshitudha civilians kept on supporting PLAN combatants to have a presence in Oshitudha and nearby villanges. In the case of Namibia, during its liberation struggle, elements of both population-centric and

enemy-centric strategies might have been at play. SWAPO's ability to mobilize and gain support from the Namibian population could align with a population-centric approach, while their efforts to confront and resist the occupying forces could reflect an enemy-centric aspect there were repeated allegations of torture, including waterboarding, beatings, and the use of electric shock. Hence, Oshitudha civilians were at odds with the SAF, which they could not support. The findings of this study reveal that Oshitudha civilians were prevented from supporting SASF by one factor: PLAN combatants would execute anyone suspected of corroborating with the enemy. On the other hand, Iita Petrus explained that those who supported the SASF secretly in Oshidha were the result of the torture and beating that they received. Jeremy Silvester, Martha Akawa, and Napandulwe Shiweda (2014) quoted Bishop Dumeni, head of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia from December 1978, remembered the display of the bodies of dead PLAN combatants to communities as a particularly counterproductive tactic used by the security forces, particularly Koevoet, during the 1980s. Kamongo argues that the display meant to send a message to SWAPO followers was entirely just confirming that they were brutal animals. As Dumeni argued in Jeremy Silvester, Martha Akawa, and Napandulwe Shiweda (2014), the display of bodies was primarily a display of power aimed at intimidating local residents, but instead, families were angered. In Oshitudha, this intimidation radicalised the people to support PLAN combatants. The weakening of the enemy as quickly as possible, as advised by the enemy-centric theory, was thus difficult to achieve as Oshitudha civilians kept on supporting PLAN combatants to have a presence in Oshitudha and nearby villanges. In the case of Namibia, during its liberation struggle, elements of both population-centric and enemy-centric strategies might have been at play. SWAPO's ability to mobilise and gain support from the

Namibian population could align with a population-centric approach, while their efforts to confront and resist the occupying forces could reflect an enemy-centric aspect.

## Conclusion of the study

The purpose of this study was to investigate how Oshitudha civilians contributed to the liberation of Namibia and the suffering they experienced throughout the war. Additionally, the study sought to examine and analyze the social and political interactions between the local civilians and PLAN fighters. The conclusions drawn from this study indicate that Oshitudha civilians made a crucial contribution to Namibia's liberation struggle. All three objectives of this study were fully achieved, thus this study arrived at a meaningful conclusion. With regards to the first objective; which examined how selected Oshitudha civilians contributed to Namibia's liberation struggle and the types of contributions they made, this study concludes that Oshitudha civilians supported PLAN combatants with food, medicine, accommodation, transportation and intelligence information the SASF. These provisions were crucial for the continuation of the armed liberation struggle inside Namibia.

This study also established that PLAN combatants who were killed by members of the SASF were buried secretly by civilians from the Oshitudha village. The study also discussed how Oshitudha civilians provided humanitarian assistance to exile-bound refugees who were fed, accommodated, and clothed by civilians when they were on their journey into exile. To conceal the identity of PLAN combatants, Oshitudha civilians provided them with civilian clothes as well as ran errands for PLAN combatants.

The second objective of the study, which analysed the social and political interaction between the local population and PLAN combatants, revealed that Oshitudha civilians and PLAN combatants were bound together by Oshiwambo norms and customs. The

Oshiwambo culture paved the way for Oshitudha civilians to consider PLAN combatants as their children, brothers, and uncles. Many mothers in Oshitudha had children who joined PLAN, so they looked at all PLAN combatants as their own children. This study concluded that Oshitudha civilians were also supporters of SWAPO's political and economic ideology of ending the exploitation of black Namibians by apartheid colonists. The general strike by contract workers from Owamboland between June 1971 and April 1972 enlightened civilians about the exploitative contract labour system. Moreover, Heini Isak argued that the SASF mode of operations, which included beating civilians, killing, raping, and destroying of people's properties, convinced civilians to support PLAN combatants. This made it easy for both civilians and PLAN combatants to fight the common enemy. This political environment also eased PLAN combatant's operations in Oshitudha.

This study also highlighted areas of conflict and disagreement between Oshitudha civilians and PLAN combatants, such as the issue of forced exile and the prevention of some civilians from going into exile. Findings in chapter six revealed unspeakable atrocities committed against Oshitudha civilians by members of the SASF. Torture, assault, destruction of properties, intimidation, arrest, detention, and killing of Oshitudha civilians were the major criminal acts committed against Oshitudha civilians by members of the SASF. These atrocities were aimed at discouraging Oshitudha civilians from offering material and moral support to PLAN combatants. However, the violence did not force civilians to give up supporting PLAN combatants. This study further concludes that members of the SASF wreaked vengeance on the people of Oshitudha whenever there was combat contact between the SASF and PLAN combatants in the village or its vicinity. The SASF also displayed bodies of dead PLAN combatants at cuca shops, churches and schools. The dead bodies of alleged

PLAN combatants were tied to armored cars' bonnets and spare wheels. Clearly, the disrespectful displays of dead bodies like trophies traumatized Oshitudha civilians and motivated them, at the same time, to consolidate their support for PLAN soldiers operating in their area. Life or death, they believed, Namibia would be liberated, and their suffering would definitely end.

This study has made a contribution to the historiography of the Namibian armed liberation struggle in several ways. Firstly, the study might have made an immense contribution to the undocumented gaps in the current literature about civilians' contribution to the Namibian armed liberation struggle. These areas may include the torture and disappearance of civilians, the role of women in Namibia's armed liberation struggle, SWAPO mobilization of civilians in the war zone and civilian casualties during the war for Namibia's independence.

## Recommendations for further research

This study concluded that Oshitudha civilians made vital contributions to Namibia's liberation struggle. However, many of them have not been given war veterans' status following Namibia's independence. Therefore, there is a need for a study that investigates this ongoing problem. The Namibian constitution, Article 32, empowers the president of the republic of Namibia to establish a commission of inquiry. Therefore, there is a need to establish a presidential commission to explore a possibility of prosecuting belligerents who murdered civilians across Namibia. The commission should be similar to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of South Africa or the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC) in Rwanda. Another issue worth investigating is forced exile. Allegations are rife that PLAN combatants abducted civilians from northern Namibia into Angola against their will. This is

another potential area of research that is worth investigating. During the liberation struggle, SASF arrested civilians who were never seen again, further studies should investigate what happened to people who went missing while under the SASF custody. Moreover, this study recommends that further research needs to be done examining the contributions of women to Namibia's liberation struggle focusing specifically in the war zone. This study focused on the contribution of civilians to the Namibian armed liberation struggle in the Oshitudha village only. Similar studies should be carried out in other villages across northern Namibia.

## Summary

This chapter discussed the findings of the study. It further analyzed the crucial contribution that was made by civilians from Oshitudha village towards the Namibian armed liberation struggle. Moreover, the chapter addressed the participation of Oshitudha civilians in the armed liberation struggle that involved two warring armies. It further deliberated on how Oshitudha civilians coped with and survived the SASF brutality. Moreover, the chapter discussed the impact of the curfew in Oshitudha village. The final part of this chapter discussed the successes of the Namibian armed liberation struggle, provided recommendations for areas that require further research, and concluded the study.

## Definition of terms

The purpose of this section is to explain the key terms that are used throughout the study.

**Ekoma** – An Oshiwambo word for a SWAPO combatant.

**Eetoli** – An Oshiwambo word for terrorists. It was used by South African security forces to refer to SWAPO insurgents.

**Omapokolo** - Palm branches

**Koevoet** – An Afrikaans word for crowbar. Koevoet was a South African Police Counter Insurgency Unit established in 1979.

**Oshiwambo** – A language spoken by Aawambo ethnic group of north central Namibia and south western Angola.

**Aawambo** – The largest ethnic group in northern Namibia. The subtribes of Aawambo are made up of Aakwanyama, Aambandja, Aandongga, Aakwambi, Aagandjela, Aambalantu, Aakwaluudhi and Aakolokandhi-Eunda.

**Omahangu** – Aawambo staple crop.

**Omakakunya** – Name given to black Koevoet members. They were often accused of raping, killing, torturing and arresting civilians suspected of supporting PLAN fighters.

**Ekakunya** – Singular for Omakakunya.

**Puppet- [opapeta in Oshiwambo]** Collaborators with SASF.

**SASF**- South African Security Forces. It included SWATF, Koevoet, South African Defence Force (SADF).

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### **Iitudha nomudhingoloko gwayo**

Iitudha oya Napatela

Oyo Uushiya na Masha

YakaSuuka kEekandjo

Ekango lyafa ombuga

Nokadhiya ka Shipomholo

Etale lyamtusununi

Nokatele ka Shile

Noshana sha Shikoto

Oshana shekango

Nokatha kekango

### **Oshitudha Vullange and its sorounding**

Oshitudha belong to Napatela

It has Uushiya and Omasha water wells

Oshitudha belong to kaSuuka Ekandjo

Ekango looks like a desert

And Okadhiya ka Shipomholo

It has wonders such as

Mutsununi's Lake

Kashile's Lake

Shikoto's Lake

And Okatha Kekango

**Oshitudha Poem:** A poem glorifying Oshitudha village. The author of this poem is not known. The poem was narrated to the author by Kaghono Wilhelm

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1: Ethical Clearance Certificate



#### ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

**Ethical Clearance Reference Number:** HREC-NH/03/12/2020

**Date:** 01-12-2020

This Ethical Clearance Certificate is issued by the University of Namibia Research Ethics Committee (UREC) in accordance with the University of Namibia's Research Ethics Policy and Guidelines. Ethical approval is given in respect of undertakings contained in the Research Project outlined below. This Certificate is issued on the recommendations of the ethical evaluation done by the Faculty/Centre/Campus Research & Publications Committee sitting with the Postgraduate Studies Committee.

**Title of Project:** AN INVESTIGATION OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS MADE BY CIVILIANS TO NAMIBIA'S LIBERATION STRUGGLE: A CASE STUDY OF SELECTED WAR NARRATIVES FROM OSHITUDHA IN OMUSATI REGION, NAMIBIA

**Nature/Level of Project:** M.A. (NON-HEALTH) (NQF9)

**Researcher:** IYAMBO GABRIEL IITHEMBU

**Student Number:** 200967720

**Faculty:** HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

**Supervisor(s):** DR. V. SHIGWEDHA

Take note of the following:

- (a) Any significant changes in the conditions or undertakings outlined in the approved Proposal must be communicated to the UREC. An application to make amendments may be necessary.
- (b) Any breaches of ethical undertakings or practices that have an impact on ethical conduct of the research must be reported to the UREC.
- (c) The Principal Researcher must report issues of ethical compliance to the UREC (through the Chairperson of the Faculty/Centre/Campus Research & Publications Committee) at the end of the Project or as may be requested by UREC.
- (d) The UREC retains the right to:
  - (i) Withdraw or amend this Ethical Clearance if any unethical practices (as outlined in the Research Ethics Policy) have been detected or suspected,
  - (ii) Request for an ethical compliance report at any point during the course of the research.

REC wishes you the best in your research.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P.L. Beyer", is written over a faint, larger version of the same signature.

Prof. P.L. Beyer, Deputy Chair: HREC-NH  
pp Chair: HREC-NH

## Appendix 2: Research Permission Letter

### CENTRE FOR RESEARCH SERVICES

Office of the Pro-Vice Chancellor: Research Innovation and Development  
UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA, Private Bag, 13301 Windhoek, Namibia  
340 Mandume Ndemufayo Avenue, Pioneers Park, Office F224



### RESEARCH PERMISSION LETTER

Student Name IYAMBO GABRIEL IITHEMBU  
Student number 200967720  
Programme MASTER OF EDUCATION (HISTORY)  
Approved research title AN INVESTIGATION OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS MADE BY CIVILIANS TO NAMIBIA'S LIBERATION STRUGGLE: A CASE STUDY OF SELECTED WAR NARRATIVES FROM OSHITUDHA IN OMUSATI REGION, NAMIBIA.

#### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

I hereby confirm that the above mentioned student is registered at the University of Namibia for the programme indicated. The proposed study met all the requirements as stipulated in the University guidelines and has been approved by the relevant committees.

The proposal adheres to ethical principles as per attached Ethical Clearance Certificate. Permission is hereby granted to carry out the research as described in the approved proposal.

Best Regards

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Indongo', is written over a horizontal line.

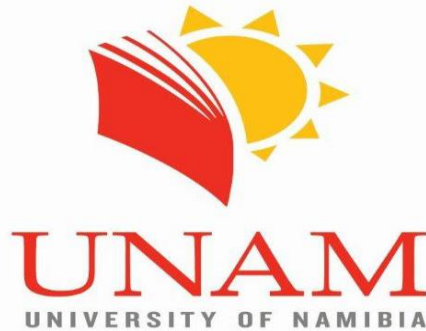
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

25 / 06 / 2021

Prof. N. Indongo  
Director, Centre for Research Services,  
Tel: +264 61 206 3004  
E-mail: nkanime@unam.na

OFOLOMA YUUYELELE WAA KUTHIMBINGA NE GANDJO LYE PITIKILO OKU KUTHA OMBINGA MEPEKAAPEKO.

### APPENDIX 3: OSHIWAMBO



**EDHINA LYO POLOYEKA YOMAPEKAAPEKO:** Epekaapeko kombinga yo makwatho ga ningwa kaakwashigwana pethimbo lyiita ye kondjelo mangeluko ya Namimbiya: Oshihooelwa sho mahokolo giita okuza momukunda gwa Shitudha moshitopolwahogololo sha Musati, Namimbiya.

**ONOMOLA YO LIFELESA:**

**OMUPEKAAPEKI GOTANGO:** Iiyambo Gabriel Iithembu

**OKAKETHA KO POOSA:** 22739, Ovenduka

**ONOMOLA YO NGODHI:** 0816248044

Oto hiwa ne simaneko enene wu kutha ombinga me pekaapeko go poloyeka ndjino. Ktha ethimbo lya gwana eto lesa uyelele wa gandjwa mo fooloma ndjika. Uyelele mbuka ota wu ka ndjandjukununwa mule noku hokolola elalakano lyo poloyeka ndjika. Osha simana shinene wu kale wa yeelwa kutya owuuviteko opoloyeka ndjika no owuuvite ko kutya ngwee mo poloyeka muka oto kuthamo ombinga ngiini. Oshinima oshikwawo, ekutho mbinga lyoye **okuza kehalo lyoy mwene** na owa mangeluka okutya ino hala oku kutha ombinga. Ngele owa ti ino hala oku kutha ombinga, kapena oshilanduli shasha oshiwini tashi ku landula. Owa mangeluka okwii kuthamo momapekaapeko ethimbo kehe nopo ghatu keshe nando wa itayela oku kutha ombinga mo poloyeka ndji.

Epekaapeko ndino olya yuthwa kokangundu kee komitiye keeveta dhokoninga omapekaapeko go panu koshipudhilo sho pombanda sha Namimbiya . Epekaapeko ndino ali ningwa shiikolela keeveta dho pauntu no milandu go pauntu go pauyuni yo Helisiki , omilandu omiwanawa dho pawu kilinika dhuUzilo wa Afulika nosho woo omilandu dho pauntu dhomapekaapeko dha Namimbiya.

#### **1. Omapekaapeko go poloyeka ogeli ko mbinga ya shike ?**

Opoloyeka yeilongo ndjika oyii kwatelela komukunda gwa Shitudha moshikandjo hogololo sha Musati . Omwaalu gwaanu yeli 23 ota ya kutha ombinga meilongo poloyeka ndika . Eyilongo poloyeka ndika olili ko mbinga yo ma kwatho ngoka

aakwashigwana yo moShitudha ya gandja me kendjelo manguluka Iya Namimbiya. Eyilongo ndino olya pumbiwa shaashi ondjokonona ye kondjelomanguluko olyafa ali dhimbi eigandjo no ma kwathelo ngoka ga ningwa kaakwashigwana mboka yali meni lyiita pethimbo lyekondjelo manguluko Iya Namimbiya.

## **2. Omo Iwashike wa ithanwa wu kuthe ombinga?**

Ngwee owa ithanwa wu kuthe ombinga meyilongo ndika shaashi ngwee owa mona iita no wa kutha ombinga miita yekondjeomanguluko momukunda gwa Shitudha. Okukukala koye komoShitudha owuna uuyeleele wo ngushu, sho osho nee wa hogololelwa owina wu kuthe ombinga meilongo poloyeka ndika.

## **3. Inakugwanithwa yoye oyini?**

Nge owiitayela oku kutha ombinga, andi keku pula omapulo shinasha noma kwatho nga wa kwathela iita ye kondjelo manguluko. Oma pulaapulo andi kega kwata noka kwata mawi ngele owa pange uuthemba opo ndi kwate ewi Iyoye.

## **4. Oto mono omauwanawa moku kutha ombinga meilongo poloyeka ndika?**

Ito mono nando uuyeleele weku ukilila moku kutha ombinga. Nando ooshono, ekuthombinga Iyoye ali ka monitha aashitudha ne pipi lyokomungula pa ku kwathela oku shanga ondjokonona yomukunda gwa Shitudha pa ku ndokumendinga ondjokonona ye kondjelo manguluko moShitudha.

## **5. Opuna eniko Iyiponga ngele wa kutha ombinga mo poloyeka ndjika?**

Apeya pu ka kale pena oshiponga shoma shoma hadhuluko shaa wa tameka oku popya omahokololo giita . Nge owa tameka oku ninga oma shwiilili noku kakama lombwelange meendelelo opo sitope oku ninga omapulaapulo eta ndi kwatathana nomuhungi mwenyo ngoka iilongekidha ethiimbo alishe eye eku kwathele meendelelo. Aahungimwenyo taya landula oyiilongekidha ethimbo kehe okukwathela:

N.N. Nekongo: omuhungi mwenyo ko Ndeyapo Psychological Practice                      Tel: 065 248808

**Prisca Monica** : Omuhungi mwenyo ko Outapi health center      Cell: 081 6288292

Hilunanye Shiwa      Omuhungi mwenyo ko shipangelo shepangelo kuUtapi      Cell 0812673626

## **6. Oto futwa wu kuthe ombinga meyilongo poloyeka ndika?**

Ito futwa opo wu kuthe ombinga me eilongo poloyeka ndika.

## **7. Opuna oshinima waala okuninga nenge oku shuwa?**

Oto vulu oku kwatathana na Ndokotola Viliho Shigwedha Amukwaya ko iimeyila vshigwedha@unam.na nge owuna omapulo nenge wa tsakaneka omaupyakadhi gamwe. Oto vulu oku kwatathana no senda yo mapekaapeko noma nyanyangidho ko +264 061 2063061; pclaassen@unam.na nge owuna ishewe oma limbililo gamwe nenge oma nyenyeto ina ga kandulwapo nawa ngaashi wa hala komupekaapeki gwo tango. Oto pewa okopi yuuyelele mbuka no fooloma yoye wuyi pungule.

### 8.Egano lyo mukuthimbinga

Oku shayina pevi mano, onda ..... itayela oku kutha ombinga me eilongo poloyeka (Epekaapeko kombinga yo makwatho ga ningwa kaakwashigwana pethimbo lyiita ye kondjelo manguluko ya Namimbiya : Oshihooelwa sho mahokolo giita okuza momukunda gwa Shitudha moshitopolwahogololo sha Musati , Namimbiya ).

### 9.Onda gana kutya:

- a) Onda lesa nenge onda leshelwa uuyelele wuli mo fooloma yoku gandja uuthemba na oya shangwa Melaka ndi nduuvite na onda manguluka nalyo.
- b) Onda pewa omito yoku pula omapulo no mapulo gange oga yamukulwa nawa.
- c) Onda uvako kutya oku kutha ombinga me yilongo poloyeka ndika *oku ngaye mwene* na ina ndi kondjithwa ndi kuthe ombinga nando.
- d) Apeya ndika hogolole oku etha eyilongo poloyeka ndika kehe ethimbo nda hala kapena oshilanduli shasha nando okashona.
- e) Onda iteela/ inandi iteela oku kwatwa ewi pethimbo lyo mapulaapulo.

Ya shayinwa (eshala) ..... (esiku)  
 ..... 20.....

.....  
 Eshaino kasha lyomukuthimbinga Eshaino kasha lyo mbangi

### 10.Egano lyo mupekaapeki gwo tango

Ngame *Iiyambo Gabriel Iithembu* otandi gana kutya:

- Onda fatulula uyelele mo ndokumende ku .....
- Onda mu indila a pule omapulo eta ndi mupe ethimbo lya gwana ndi yamukle omapulo ge .
- Onda gwanenwa kuudha kutya okwa uvako iikumungu ayishe yo poloyeka ndjika , ngaashi sha popiwa pombnda .
- Onda/ inandi fatulula ondokumende ndjika moShiwambo.

.....  
 .....

Eshaino kasha lyomu pekaaepki

Eshaino kaha lyo mhangi

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET AND CONSENT FORM

APPEDIX 4: ENGLISH PARTICIPANT  
INFORMATION LEAFLET AND CONSENT FORM



**TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:** An investigation of the contribution made by civilians to Namibia's liberation struggle: A case study of war narrative from Oshitudha village in Omusati region, Namibia

**REFERENCE NUMBER:**

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:** Iiyambo Gabriel Iithembu

**ADDRESS:** P.O Box 22739, Windhoek

**CONTACT NUMBER:** 0816248044

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this project. It is very important that you are fully satisfied that you clearly understand what this research entails and how you could be involved. Also, your participation is **entirely voluntary** and you are free to decline to participate. If you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part.

This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee at The University of Namibia and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of the international Declaration of Helsinki, South African Guidelines for Good Clinical Practice and Namibian National Research Ethics Guidelines.

**7. What is this research study all about?**

The study is based in Oshitudha village in omusati region. A total number of 23 participants will take part in the study. The study is about contribution that civilians in Oshitudha village made to Namibia's liberation struggle. The study is necessary

because the history of the liberation struggle led to forget the sacrifice and contribution that civilians in the war zone had to make for the struggle of Namibia's independence.

**8. Why have you been invited to participate?**

You have been invited to participate in the study because you witnessed and participated in the liberation struggle in Oshitudha village. The fact that you lived in Oshitudha village, you have valuable information that is needed for the study, hence you were purposively selected to take part in the study.

**9. What will your responsibilities be?**

If you agree to participate in this study, I would like you to answer my questions about your contributions to Namibia's liberation struggle, with your permission, I will record the interview with a digital recorder.

**10. Will you benefit from taking part in this research?**

You will not receive direct benefits from participating. However, your participation will benefit Oshitudha villagers and the generations to come by helping in recording Namibia's liberation struggle according to civilians' experiences from Oshitudha.

**11. Are there any risks involved in your taking part in this research?**

There might be some risks of re-traumatization when you tell me about your experiences. If you feel distress at any time, please tell me immediately. We will stop the interview and I will contact a psychological counsellor who is on stand-by to come and assist you immediately. Furthermore, there will be no costs involved for the participants. The following psychological counsellors are on stand-by:

N.N. Nekongo : psychological counsellor at Ndeyapo Psychological Practice      Tel: 065 248808

**Prisca Monica** : psychological counsellor at Outapi health center      Cell: 081 6288292

Hilunanye Shiwa      psychological counsellor at Outapi district hospital      Cell 0812673626

**12. Will you be paid to take part in this study and are there any costs involved?**

You will not be paid to take part in the study and there are no costs involved.

**7. Is there anything else that you should know or do?**

You can also contact the Centre for Research and Publications at +264 061 2063061; pclaassen@unam.na if you have any concerns or complaints that have not been

adequately addressed by the investigator. You will receive a copy of this information and consent form for your own records.

### **8. Declaration by participant**

By signing below, I ..... agree to take part in a research study entitled (*insert title of study*).

#### **I declare that:**

- f) I have read or had read to me this information and consent form and it is written in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.
- g) I have had a chance to ask questions and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- h) I understand that taking part in this study is **voluntary** and I have not been pressurized to take part.
- i) I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalized or prejudiced in any way.
- j) I agree /do not agree to being recorded during the interviews

Signed at (*place*) ..... on (*date*) .....  
20....

### **9. Declaration by investigator**

I, Iiyambo Gabriel Iithembu, declare that:

- I explained the information in this document to .....
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above
- I did/ did not interpret this document into Oshiwambo.

Signature of investigator

Signature of witness

## APPENDIX 5: Special Consent Form

**TITLE OF RESEARCH:** AN INVESTIGATION OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS MADE BY CIVILIANS TO NAMIBIA'S LIBERATION STRUGGLE: A CASE STUDY OF SELECTED WAR NARRATIVES FROM OSHITUDHA IN OMUSATI REGION, NAMIBIA.

**Researcher: Iiyambo Gabriel Iithembu**

Master of Arts in History

Department of Geography, History, Environment Studies and Tourism Management

University of Namibia

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giiyambo@unam.na

### **Part I: Information Sheet**

#### **Introduction**

My name is Iiyambo Gabriel Iithembu. I am doing a Master of arts degree in history with the University of Namibia. To graduate, I have to complete a study titled: An investigation of the contribution made by civilians to Namibia's liberation struggle: A case study of selected war narratives from Oshitudha in Omusati region, Namibia. I am therefore requesting you to participate in the study as respondent since you witnessed the liberation war in Oshitudha village. You can take your time and decide if you want to take part or not. Should you not understand some of the words or concepts, I will take time to explain them to you. You can also ask questions at any time.

#### **Purpose of the research**

The Namibian liberation struggle has many unsung heroes who contributed to the fight against colonialism and apartheid, especially civilians who live in rural areas. Yet their contribution appears forgotten and excluded from the liberation struggle historiography. This study aims to explore the contribution that civilians in villages such as Oshitudha have

made during the Namibian liberation struggle. This is particularly about interrogating their suffering, sacrifices and the trauma that they live with in the aftermath of the war.

### **Type of Research Intervention**

The research will involve your participation by an interview. The researcher will ask you questions from the interview guide but if necessary follow up questions will be raised to probe the facts you have presented. The interview will last for an hour.

### **Participant Selection**

You have been invited to take part in this research because you have witnessed the war of the liberation struggle in Oshitudha village and you can probably give primary accounts of events that happened in Oshitudha during the war.

### **Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. It is your choice whether to participate or not. If you choose not to participate there will be no any consequences or whatsoever. The interviews are solely academic research purposes. And should you be skeptical feel free to confirm my identity with my supervisor whose contacts details are provided below.

### **Procedures**

I'm inviting you to take part in this research project, the title of which is given above. If you accept, you will be asked to participate in an interview with **Iiyambo Gabriel Iithembu**. During the interview, the researcher will sit down with you in a comfortable place of your choice. Should you prefer the interview to take place in the comfort of your home environment it is also fine with me. If you do not wish to answer any of the questions during the interview, you may say so and the interviewer will move on to the next question. No one else but the interviewer will be present unless you would like someone else to be there. The information recorded during the interview will be kept at the National Archives of Namibia as closed files. Only the researcher and the supervisor will have access to the data collected during the interview. The entire interview will be tape-recorded but should you feel uncomfortable with it you will not be recorded. Instead, the researcher will rely on note taking. Furthermore, your name will be used in the study in order to ensure the integrity and reliability of the study. You have the right to stop or refuse to take part if you do not want your name to be used in the study.

## **Duration**

The research is expected to last for a period of 6 months. During this period, the researcher will visit you once or twice for interviews. When the interviews are completed the writing process will then commence under my supervisor's supervision. This process will be followed by the submission of the research theses to the faculty of Humanities and Social Science for examination and grading. I will keep you informed about the progress made and you will receive a copy of my research project when the study is completed.

## **Risks**

Since the war for the independence of Namibia has left many people emotionally and psychologically traumatized, the researcher will enlist the service of a psychologist as well as a social worker. In case of a meltdown when interviewees remember and relate experiences of pain and suffering. Similarly, victimization of people and their families have been prevalent in the war zone, with people who joined and fought on apartheid forces being victimized and labeled colonizers for example. The researcher is aware that some civilians were suspected to be enemy collaborators. However, the researcher will not entertain rumors and hearsays.

## **Benefits**

The benefit of this study will be in the form of creating awareness about the vital contribution that civilians have made to the liberation struggle. The study will benefit more young generations of Oshitudha and Namibia in general about the history of Namibia's liberation struggle.

## **Reimbursements**

The researcher will provide transport and money should you request to travel to town such as Outapi, Onesi, or Ruaccana during the interview.

## **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality of the data that you have provided is not guaranteed. But should you have you feel that certain information that you provided is sensitive for the public consumption you are at liberty to exclude such information.

### **Sharing of Results**

You will receive a copy of my research project when this study is completed.

### **Right to Refuse or Withdraw**

You do not have to take part in this research if you do not wish to do so. There will be no negative consequences should you chose not to participate in the interview or decline to sign the consent form.

### **Who to Contact**

Should you have any further queries or encounter any problems, you should not hesitate to contact Dr V Shigwedha at the following contact details:

Tel: +264 061 2063061

Mobile: 0814144884

Email: vshigwedha@unam.na

Should you have any further concerns or complaints that have not been adequately addressed by the investigator or the supervisor you can also contact the Centre for Research and Publications at the following e-mail address: pclaassen@unam.na. You will receive a copy of this information and consent form for your own records.

## Appendix: 6 Semi-Structured Interview Guide: English

### **AN INVESTIGATION OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS MADE BY CIVILIANS TO NAMIBIA'S LIBERATION STRUGGLE: A CASE STUDY OF SELECTED WAR NARRATIVES FROM OSHITUDHA IN OMUSATI REGION, NAMIBIA**

My name is Iiyambo Gabriel Iithembu, a student at the University of Namibia, pursuing a Masters in History. I'm conducting a research study on the contribution made by civilians to Namibia's liberation struggle; a case study of Oshitudha village in Omusati region, Namibia. I would like to interview you for this study. The study aims to unearth forgotten contribution that Oshitudha villagers made to Namibia's liberation struggle as well as difficulties they experienced during the war. The study will be conducted in Oshiwambo. please feel free to ask were you do not understand. You can opt out of the interview any time without any consequences. The interview will last for an hour. Thank you for availing your valuable time to take part in the interview.

#### **SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC**

Gender

- Male
- Female

#### **SECTION B: CONTRIBUTIONS TO LIBERATION STRUGGLE**

**Name**.....

**Place of Birth** .....

**Parents**.....

**Siblings** .....

**Schooling**.....

**Political awakening** .....

**Civilians**


- 1 What types of contribution have you made to the liberation struggle?
- 2 How did you politically interact with SWAPO freedom fighters?
- 3 Did you have any social interactions with SWAPO fighters?
- 4 How did you interact socially and politically with Apartheid government and its state apparatus?
5. Where you toured during the war? Can you please explain the incident (if any) of torture you experienced during the war as a result of aiding the liberation struggle?
6. How was life in Oshitudha during the war?
7. Between SWAPO and South African forces, who did you believe were fighting for the right cause and why?
- 8 What does the independence mean to you? and do you have you have pride that you have contributed to liberation struggle?
10. What types of rewards did you get for contributing to the liberation struggle?

**Ex-PLAN combatant**

1. Do you think Oshitudha villagers contributed to Namibia's liberation struggle?
2. When did you arrive in Oshitudha village to fight the war?
3. Can you explain how Oshitudha villagers helped you during the war?
4. What were your attitudes towards Oshitudha villagers during the war?
5. Do you remember any people and households were you got important help during the war?
6. How did Oshitudha villagers perceived freedom fighters during the war?
7. What were the sacrifices that Oshitudha villagers made to help you during the war?

8. Can you explain any incidents (if any) were of Oshitudha villagers suffered at the hands of SASF for assisting you during the war?
9. Can you please explain instances were any Oshitudha villager refused to help you during the war?

## Appendix: 6 Omusati Regional Council permission letter

	REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA	
<b>OMUSATI REGIONAL COUNCIL</b>		
<b>OFFICE OF THE CHIEF REGIONAL OFFICER</b>		
Tel: +264 65 251019 Fax: +264 65 251078 / 088639090 E-mail: <a href="mailto:info@omusatirc.gov.na">info@omusatirc.gov.na</a> Website: <a href="http://www.omusatirc.gov.na">www.omusatirc.gov.na</a> Our Ref: 9/2/2 Enquiries: Mr Gervasius Kashindi		Erf 1080 Namaungu Street Private Bag 523 OUTAPI  11 October 2019
<p>Iiyambo Gabriel lithembu Student number: 200967720 Department of History and Geography <b>UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA</b></p>		
Dear Mr Iiyambo		
<b>REQUEST FOR APPROVAL TO CONDUCT INTERVIEW WITH PEOPLE WITHIN OSHITUDHA VILLAGE IN YOUR REGION</b>		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The Council hereby acknowledges receipt of your Letter dated 8 October 2019 regarding the above-mentioned subject</li><li>2. We therefore would like to inform you that approval is hereby granted for you to proceed with the interview as requested. However, you are advised to report yourself to the Honourable Councillor at Outapi Constituencies Office before you embarks on the work in the Constituency.</li><li>3. In addition, you are requested to provide a copy of the findings to the Regional Council.</li></ol>		
Sincerely,  Gervasius Kashindi CHIEF REGIONAL OFFICER		
Cc: Hon Fillemon Shikwambi – Regional Councillor: Outapi Constituency		
All official correspondences should be addressed to the Chief Regional Office		