



# Shifting Paradigms

## Engaging in Peaceful Change in Southern Africa

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### The Dialectic between Dismantling and Rebuilding

by Carl Stauffer

*“See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and plant.” (Jeremiah 1:10, NIV)*

**B**efore prophetic peace can be enacted, it must satisfy the call for justice. The Prophet Jeremiah understood this principle well and clearly puts this message forward: *“You are going to have to take some things apart, before you can rightly put them back together!”* In order to accomplish the twinning together of accountability for the past and harmony in the future, some societal scaffolding may need to be shaken. While popular culture parades a shallow, soothing recipe for “ever-after” peace, durable peace never comes in a neatly wrapped package. Durable peace is birthed out of paradox—the paradox of truth and mercy; of confrontation and reconciliation; of resistance and relinquishment. Durable peace re-visits the past in order to move forward. It digs down deep into a conflict’s “root system” in order to lay a stable foundation for tangible peace. Sometimes it even creates more conflict by a reconfiguring of relationships and structures in the present, in order to foster less violence in the future. Durable peace is about rectifying the past, reconfiguring the present and re-visioning a just future. Moreover, these processes may well involve both “tearing down” as well as “building up”.

This edition of the *Peace Office Newsletter* explores how *dismantling* and *rebuilding* are

two sides of the same coin and how both are necessary processes for *change*. How do individuals and entire societies change without resorting to violence? How can we embrace change when it may necessitate a painful peeling away before growth can happen? In most cases people and nations embark on positive change precisely in the “rub” between deconstructing that which is death-dealing and reconstructing that which is life-giving. A kernel must break out of its shell before it can nurture new life in the soil. While paradigms of development have historically focused rather singularly on how we can *build up* life forces, this *Newsletter* issue challenges us to learn to embrace an advocacy for change that calls us to see life in both the deconstruction and in the reconstruction processes.

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) is an international relief, development and peace agency, but by the very nature of its values and limited size and resources does not claim to have a grand impact on the immediate causes or symptoms of poverty, violence or development in Africa. However, as a “mustard seed” organization, MCC understands its function to be that of “*transformative yeast*”—a seemingly invisible, yet powerful force that over time can nurture significant structural shifts. Sociologist Malcolm Gladwell in his book entitled, *Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference* defines this incremental yet monumental change process as, “when a rare phenome-

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## African Peacebuilding Institute

The African Peacebuilding Institute (API) is a partnership between Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and the Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation (MEF) and is located in Kitwe, Zambia. The API was launched in 2001, and offers an annual intensive two-month course in conflict and peace studies from a Christian peace church perspective.

The Institute caters to students from across Africa who are pursuing academic certificates, professional enrichment, and/or personal development and growth. It combines theory and practice for conflict resolution through peacebuilding, nonviolence, trauma healing, and reconciliation.

The API was featured in the *Peace Office Newsletter* issue of January–March 2002, and can be found at the MCC Web site [mcc.org/respub/pon/](http://mcc.org/respub/pon/)

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non starts to occur more and more frequently.” Gladwell’s outlook challenges us to shift lenses and see that an accumulation of small acts of justice, repeated frequently enough, can serve as the tipping point that dismantles large death-dealing phenomena, and makes room for new growth and life. Our challenge is to learn to value these small—often courageous—actions, and to see them as significant instruments of personal and corporate transformation that power the “tearing down” as well as “building up” that are necessary for sustaining shalom.

This *Newsletter* issue explores a number of the “tipping points” for deconstructive as well as reconstructive change with which MCC is currently engaged in southern Africa. In the first article, Jethro and Doris Dube examine issues surrounding the Lesotho Highlands Water Project, and call us to examine superficial notions of “political peace” in a country where many people have suffered the injustice of forced displacement in the name of water “resource development.” This is followed by an article by Thami Sonile who describes some of the courageous activities of Christian faith-based groups in Zimbabwe as the people of Zimbabwe continue to seek justice and work toward a widely-accepted system of good governance. Next, Mike Batley, Director of the Restorative Justice Centre in South Africa, invites us to reconsider South Africa’s historically punitive justice paradigm. Batley describes new possibilities for justice that are coming into use in mainstream South Africa even in the face of the current de-stabilizing crime wave. The following article by Hlob’sile Nxumalo highlights efforts by the Swaziland Church to speak and act cohesively around the HIV/AIDS pandemic facing that nation.

She discusses the need to tear down walls of disunity and replace them with the basis for reconciliation and joint action. Following this, Mpho Matlhakola and Nomfundo Mogapi grapple with the generational responsibility to build peace in South Africa by tending to the needs of former liberation soldiers. What does it mean to try to deconstruct a worldview of violence and reconstruct a nonviolent lifestyle in ex-fighters now that South Africa is 14 years into democracy? The final article gives a brief glimpse at the power of a learning exchange between Mozambique and Sudan that focused on the important role that the Church can play in post-war reconstruction.

The mining sector in South Africa has long provided jobs to many from other African countries in southern Africa. In addition, many persons from throughout Africa have come to South Africa in the 14 years since the end of apartheid. A number came because they found attractive employment opportunities in the South African economy, while a significant number of them are refugees from nearby countries. However, the recent violence in South Africa—much of it as backlash to the presence of immigrants and refugees—reveals that there are negative as well as positive aspects to this inter-mingling.

In addition, all regions of Africa are susceptible to the effects of global events and decisions from outside the continent. One of these was the announcement in February 2007 that the United States planned to create a US Command for Africa (AFRICOM).

These last two topics are treated as sidebars in this *Newsletter* issue.

*Carl Stauffer is Co-ordinator of the MCC Regional Peace Network in Southern Africa.*

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## Developmental Change: Advocating for Displaced People in Lesotho

by Jethro and Doris Dube

**Through cooperation they hoped to enhance the conditions of life for the people of Lesotho and South Africa.**

**T**he word development has been defined to mean “a natural process of growth, differentiation, or evolution; to come into being (unfold) gradually or in detail.” (*The Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, 2004)

In Lesotho one of the development projects which has touched the whole nation is the

Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP). This involved the construction of Katse and Mohale Dams, which led to the displacement of about 20,000 people. As in other parts of the African continent, the construction of these dams has brought about both good and bad in the communities where the dams were built.

The story of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP) cannot be told without mention of the role played by a long-term partner of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), the Transformation Resource Center (TRC), in following up, nurturing and walking side by side with those who were adversely affected by the LHWP. TRC is an ecumenical Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) committed to working for justice, peace, democracy, good governance and for participatory sustainable development. It is the one organization which took it upon itself to identify, follow up and try to help the affected communities advocate strongly for their rights. TRC has documented detailed reports of its involvement with the people who were affected by the construction of the dams. They have even mobilized some of these people into a body called the “Survivors of the Lesotho Dams” (SOLD) project. Though still under the umbrella of TRC this body is taking on more and more responsibility to advocate for their rights. Members of SOLD are scattered all over Lesotho depending on where each person was moved to and settled.

In 1986 a treaty in the name of “development” was signed between the governments of Lesotho and the Republic of South Africa. In this treaty the two countries acknowledged water as an important natural resource crucial to the development of both their nations, and anticipated positive ripple effects for the whole of southern Africa. They recognized the importance of mutual cooperation to develop water resources which could contribute significantly to peace and prosperity in the whole region. Through this cooperation they hoped to enhance the conditions of life for the people of Lesotho and the Republic of South Africa by raising development opportunities through water resources. Specifically, water from the Senqu/Orange River would be delivered to a designated outlet in the Republic of South Africa, and such a delivery system would enable the generation of hydro-electric power for use in the Kingdom of Lesotho. Through this agreement it was envisaged that both countries would benefit from water for irrigation as well as potable water for other uses. The dams would generate hydro-electric power and develop tourism, fisheries and other projects for economic and social development. In addition Lesotho was to receive monetary royalties.

After the authorities in the two countries had agreed on the deal, the government leadership in Lesotho commissioned the Lesotho Highlands Development Authority (LHDA) to carry out the project. A number

of promises were made to the people affected by it. They were assured that if they were willing to be moved and relocated elsewhere their standard of living would not be compromised, but would be of an equal standard as they had enjoyed in their former homes. They were promised that they would be compensated both communally and individually for any loss experienced as a result of the move. Because it was anticipated that settling down in new places would be a challenge, they were promised that they would be given some training to equip and help them adjust to their new situations.

This developmental plan, signed by the authorities of the two countries, had a tremendous impact on the lives of some of the people of Lesotho. There are several versions of the story as to what it has been like for them since the treaty was signed. And one’s opinion as to the wisdom of the projects depends on which version one is listening to.

The first version applies to the people who were displaced from their homelands in order for the dams to be constructed.<sup>1</sup> Before these people were relocated to other parts of the country they enjoyed a certain standard of living. They had a lifestyle specific to only their area. They lived off the land. They kept livestock and grew crops to feed on throughout the seasons. They had lots of fruit trees to supplement their diet all year round. Above all they had an attachment to the land where their ancestors lay buried. Moving from their homes and starting all over meant that they experienced several levels of loss. They could not carry the fertile soils nor the burial grounds from their river banks to the new settlements.

The second version of the story is told by those who did not leave their villages but lost part of their land. Some villagers in the area around Katse Dam lost their fields when the dam filled up. Now they have to farm on higher ground which is not as fertile as the soils on the river banks. They lost contact with their neighbors when the dam flooded their footpaths. In order to visit they now have to go a very long way to designated bridge points. Their houses were cracked by the blasting of stones as the dams and roads were constructed.

The third version is the voices of the people in the areas to which the displaced were moved. Often these people’s voices are overlooked. Very little thought is given to how their lives were also disrupted. Strangers came to their areas and the original inhabitants had to share their grazing land, share the water sources, share the food produced

**The people who were displaced could not carry the fertile soils nor the burial grounds from their homelands to the new settlements.**

**In the areas to which the displaced were moved, land was overgrazed and classrooms, clinics and other public facilities were overcrowded.**

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## Further Resources

### BOOKS

Alexander, J, McGregor, J, and Ranger, T. *Violence and Memory—One Hundred Years in the 'Dark Forests' of Matabeleland*. Oxford: James Currey, 2000.

Ayittey, George B.N. *Africa in Chaos*. New York: St. Martins Press, 1998.

Chabal, P. and Daloz, J.P. *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument*. Oxford: James Curry, 1999.

Mamdani, Mahmood. *When Victims Become Killers—Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda*. Oxford: James Curry, 2001.

Mazrui, Ali. "The African State as Political Refugee." In *African Conflict Resolution*, edited by Smock and Crocker. Washington DC: UISP Press, 1995.

Meredith, Martin. *Our Votes, Our Guns—Robert Mugabe and the Tragedy of Zimbabwe*. New York: Public Affairs, 2002.

Reed, Phil. "U. S. Boots on Africa's Ground," *Around Africa* (a publication of the Africa Faith and Justice Network, [www.afjn.org](http://www.afjn.org)), Easter 2007.

Richards, Paul. *Fighting for the Rain Forest—War, Youth and Resources in Sierra Leone*. Oxford: James Curry, 1996.

Tutu, Desmond. *No Future Without Forgiveness*. Random House, 1999.

### ONLINE RESOURCES

[www.csvr.org.za](http://www.csvr.org.za) (Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation)

[www.resistafricom.org](http://www.resistafricom.org)

[www.transitionaljustice.net](http://www.transitionaljustice.net) (Transitional Justice Network)

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**Most of the promises made to them have never been fulfilled.**

in that area. Land was soon overgrazed. Classrooms, clinics and many other public facilities were overcrowded or overstretched.

Today, twenty years since the people of Mohale and Katse were affected by the construction of the dams, their voices are still heard. Though speaking from different locations, their message is the same. During a recent visit to these communities their anger was articulated in a number of complaints against the LHDA. They feel like a forgotten people. Most of the promises made to them have never been fulfilled. They have not been fully compensated for their loss. Because they lost the fields where they used to grow crops, they are given grain by the LHDA once a year. Many are dissatisfied because the quantities given are less than what was initially promised. The schools and clinics which they were promised have not been built. Because of the great distances between available schools some children will grow up illiterate. Travel to a health center is expensive, and yet the villagers can not fall back on traditional herbs because they lost some of them at the bottom of the lakes formed by the dams. In the village of Instambule, at least four people have drowned while trying to cross the lake on a crude boat. Such reports of drowning also apply to animals that fell into the lake because it has no protective wall. At Hamalane village one old man talked bitterly about the high rate of HIV and AIDS which he says came with the construction of the dams. Research shows this to be partly true. While there were very few documented cases at the time of the construction, the integration of people from various areas as they built the dams and the greater movement of people which was made possible when roads were constructed and people traveled more easily actually helped spread the virus.

After visiting and hearing the cries of the affected people the question remains, was this project worth the effect it has had on the Basotho people? Is the amount of water pumped into South Africa on a daily basis worth the small amounts of electricity made available to only a small fraction of the people in the Lesotho Lowlands? Is it fair for the Basotho people to be without reliable and safe water when their water is helping to develop South Africa? Is it morally correct for the Lesotho government to receive royalties of US\$50 million per year from the projects while many of the affected people do not get any individual benefit or know how the money is used for the country? There are many unanswered questions.

There are a few positive points coming from the construction of the dams. The villagers in the affected areas had toilets built for each household. However, it is not clear whether these were built to serve the people or to help prevent pollution in the lakes. At Hamalane village, at least three toilets were constructed just a few meters above the springs from which the villagers drink. There will be no way to prevent sewage seepage and water pollution for those villagers. This poses the question as to how much thought was given to the welfare of the villagers in choosing sites for toilet construction, and how many other villages face the same problem.

### Conclusion

Buried deep beneath political pacts, promises of developmental progress and the rhetoric of job creation, certain communities in Lesotho are being marginalized—disconnected from their land and displaced into greater poverty. This injustice should not be the problem of Lesotho alone; it is a burden that the entire region ought to share. If South Africa does not take this conflict seriously the next generation of young people in Lesotho will. This project contains all the elements for a regional conflict over the scarce natural resource of water. All parties would do well to work to solve this problem in an equitable way. We are reminded of the ancient African adage which states, "If you want to travel fast, go alone, but if you want to travel far go with others."

### Notes

1. A number of books have been written about these people. In "Since the Water Came", a book commissioned by Save the Children Fund (UK) and published by the Transformation Resource Center, the children from families which were moved reflect on the time before and after construction of the Lesotho Highland Water Project. Other voices speak poignantly about their loss of a healthy livelihood and what they have been reduced to in "The Irony of the White Gold" as well as "On the Wrong Side of Development" which are also TRC publications.

*Jethro and Doris Dube began in early 2008 as MCC Service Workers in Lesotho seconded to the Transformation Resource Centre (TRC), a long-term partner of MCC. A significant part of their job is to assist in advocacy for the communities displaced by the construction of the Lesotho Dams. Doris and Jethro are Zimbabwean nationals and most recently served as the MCC Representatives in Zimbabwe. Doris has held positions with Mennonite World Conference, and her writing has appeared in many Mennonite and Brethren in Christ publications.*

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# The Zimbabwe Conflict Situation

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by Thami Sonile

As I write this article, I feel like I embody the Lamentations of Jeremiah over the state of my country of birth, Zimbabwe. Zimbabweans now find themselves held at ransom by a liberation movement that arose as a response to British colonialism and was then “reborn as a government” on April 18, 1980. A protracted armed struggle for independence by those who now claim to be custodians of the country led to Zimbabwe’s political independence. As the United Nations Secretary General, Ban ki Moon, recently suggested, Zimbabwe finds herself after nearly three decades of independence under a cloud of dictatorial rule which precipitates uncertainty and threatens the political integrity of African governments

As a Zimbabwean based in South Africa serving as an MCC Regional Peace Network (RPN) Associate, I have the opportunity to head the Zimbabwe Advocacy Project and lobby for regional sympathy. This project seeks to mobilize a regional faith-based support network for peace and justice work in Zimbabwe. To this end, RPN has partnered with movements and organizations such as the Christian Alliance of Zimbabwe, Grace to Heal, and the Habakkuk Trust, among others. More recently, the project focused on the lead-up to the Zimbabwean Presidential and Parliamentary Elections held on March 29, 2008. The Christian Alliance of Zimbabwe (CAZ) has emerged as a robust and dynamic faith-based movement of church leaders drawn from different denominational backgrounds.

The Alliance was birthed in recent years during the Zimbabwean government-sponsored operation of intimidation (*Operation Murambatsvina*—Operation Clean Up!) which destroyed homes deemed as rubbish, and thereby left 700,000 people displaced and homeless.<sup>1</sup> The Alliance currently chairs the Save Zimbabwe Campaign that has organized massive prayer rallies in response to the torture and imprisonment of political leaders. The Regional Peace Network partnered with CAZ in a regional effort to mobilize and inform citizens of the member nations of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) about the current realities in Zimbabwe. This resulted in one-day consultative meetings in three countries in the region—Zambia, Mozambique and South Africa. Participants were also drawn from Swaziland, Botswana and Tanzania.

The meetings generated a sense of solidarity, and urged the delegates to lobby their own countries to actively take a stand against human rights abuses in Zimbabwe and to advocate for political freedom. This process has provided CAZ with many opportunities and networks of support within the region and advocacy work continues through this post-election period.

A look at the past may help us understand the present crisis in Zimbabwe. In the early 1980s, *Operation Gukurahundi*—“the storm that washes away dissidents,” took place in the Matabeleland region of Zimbabwe. This “storm” left 20,000 civilians dead. It was carried out by the 5th Brigade of the Zimbabwean Army. The justification was that dissidents were seeking to de-rail the hard-won independence of Zimbabwe. The Catholic Church’s Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe has documented statistical and narrative evidence of those massacres. To this time there has been no explanation nor an official apology to the people of Matabeleland, and the scars of this physical and emotional trauma have not healed. In view of this challenge, the Regional Peace Network partnered with Grace To Heal, a Baptist Church-initiated ministry dedicated to working with victims of *Operation Gukurahundi*. The Peace Network has assisted by offering training in non-violent strategies for transformation, trauma counseling/healing, etc. This has enabled Grace to Heal to move out into the remote rural areas of Matabeleland to facilitate closure to the victims of *Gukurahundi*. However, the absence of a national mandate to acknowledge and take responsibility for these acts of human destruction makes Grace to Heal’s work illegal. People are afraid to talk

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**“The Past is Always Before Us”**

—African Proverb

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**These partnerships in peace building have the power to build solid communities.**

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## Brethren in Christ Church in Zimbabwe

The Zimbabwe Brethren in Christ Church (BICC) Peace Committee was one of many church groups in Zimbabwe that were actively concerned with monitoring of the Zimbabwe election that was held in the months before the August 2003 Mennonite World Conference Assembly in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. For many Anabaptists outside the country, the press releases issued in 2002 and 2003 by the Zimbabwe Brethren in Christ Church leadership and the Mennonite World Conference office were an important source of news.

In March 2008, presidential and parliamentary elections were held in Zimbabwe. A broad coalition of Zimbabwean churches has recently spoken out against the political crackdown that followed that disputed presidential election result. Zimbabwe’s Brethren in Christ Church is a member of the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe which is one of three church groups that issued the joint statement.

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## **“I think I need to get arrested again”— One Pastor’s Response to Repression**

Senior Pastor Ray Motsi of the Bulawayo (Zimbabwe) Baptist Church was first arrested in 2002 when he challenged his congregation to raise the necessary funds and buy 70 tons of maize (corn) meal and distribute it to the many hungry people in the rural parts of Matabeleland. This he did in direct response to the Government’s false declaration that there was no food shortage in Zimbabwe. Pastor Motsi was duly charged with “feeding the opposition.” In 2004, after attending the “Prophetic Peacemaking for Pastors” seminar in South Africa, Pastor Motsi said that he felt he needed to get arrested again, in order to “wake-up” the Church to the urgency of the crisis in Zimbabwe. Well, in 2006 he had his chance. This time Motsi and a number of other pastors from the Christian Alliance were arrested and held for three days in prison. Over that time, like Paul and Silas, these pastors began to sing praises and pray out loud in the cells. By the time they were released from prison, seven inmates had dedicated their lives to Christ.

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## **Training for Speaking Up**

Habakkuk Trust, with which MCC partners, is focusing its energy on training and organizing local communities in Zimbabwe to advocate for their fundamental human needs such as water provision and other necessary services. They have developed a contextual training manual and have now trained 29 local districts in the rudimentary skills of advocacy. This group also facilitates public meetings to which local government officials are invited for them to hear the concerns and grievances of the people. In this way, elected leaders are held accountable by the people they purport to serve, and this public forum is empowering people to give voice to how they want to be governed in Zimbabwe.

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about the troubles in the 1980s for fear that the operation will be repeated.

Another organization with which MCC has been working is the Habakkuk Trust. The Trust was established to carry out research which civic organizations can then access to inform their work. The Trust serves as a “think tank” for faith-based institutions, and more recently has engaged in training grass-roots communities in non-violent advocacy strategies. Application of these strategies at local community level encourages participation by the civil society in nation-building.

These partnerships in peace building, when duplicated, have the power to build solid communities, and their stories can be shared. The perseverance of our partners

humbles us. We hope to continue to play a supportive role, to affirm our partners’ cause, and to use the press freedom available to us in South Africa to articulate their cause in the wider region.

## **Notes**

1. As well as many others who responded, the MCC Zimbabwe office supplied 60,000 blankets to the displaced persons who flooded the local churches of Bulawayo after their homes were demolished.

*Thami Sonile is a Zimbabwean currently living in South Africa. For the past six years he has been the Director of the Emthonjeni HIV/AIDS Program that services disadvantaged communities south of Johannesburg. He has been a MCC Regional Peace Network Associate in Southern Africa since 2003.*

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# **The Growth of Restorative Justice in South Africa**

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by Mike Batley

*“Thank you for your intervention. This has given me an opportunity to tell and ask everything I had inside of me. Now that I have answers to my questions I think I will manage to sleep and have a better attitude towards the offender.”*

This was the comment of an assault victim in a domestic violence situation after she had participated in a victim-offender conference. Clearly, she has an instinctive understanding of some of the principles Archbishop Desmond Tutu referred to when he wrote:

*“Forgiveness does not mean condoning what has been done. It means taking what has happened seriously and not minimizing it, drawing out the sting in the memory that threatens to poison our entire existence. It involves trying to understand perpetrators and so have empathy, to try to stand in their shoes, and to appreciate the sort of pressures and influences that might have brought them to do what they did.”<sup>1</sup>*

Coming from the perspective of a recognized world leader who chaired the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and from an ordinary individual, these comments highlight well the receptiveness and opportunity

for restorative justice in South Africa at the present time.

This openness is also seen in the response of many prosecutors, magistrates and judges when they are presented with a full explanation of restorative justice. Several High Court and Constitutional Court judgements have endorsed restorative justice very explicitly. For the past five years, the institution responsible for training magistrates has been given regular slots for presentations. The National Prosecuting Authority managed a project for training traditional leaders about domestic violence, and devoted a significant portion of the time to restorative justice. It has also documented restorative justice work at three locations and has developed guidelines for prosecutors. The Department of Correctional Services recently approached a network of organizations in the field, the Restorative Justice Initiative Southern Africa (RJISA) (of which MCC was a founding member), to submit a proposal as to how restorative justice could be incorporated into its social reintegration processes. The Department of Justice has set targets relating to diversion<sup>2</sup> and conflict resolution processes. It has promoted the use of restorative justice within its community court project. It is also support-

ing legislation for young offenders, the Child Justice Bill, that is rooted in restorative justice.

The founders of the Restorative Justice Centre (RJC) caught the restorative justice vision in 1996 when Howard Zehr of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) visited the country. Seeking to integrate it into the practical application of their Christian faith, they began to see that restorative justice was so much more than victim-offender conferencing and diversion<sup>2</sup> programs, but was relevant to the way the country approached crime and justice as a whole.

By most standards, certainly when compared with more developed countries, the crime rate in South Africa is high. "Although the murder rate, for example, decreased from 66.9 per 100,000 in 1994/95 to 39.5 in 2005/06, it is still almost eight times the world average of 5.5 and 20 times higher than the British rate of just under two per 100,000. In other words, if the current reduction rate in murder is maintained, it will still take another 15 years to reach the international norm. The figures indicate that despite the decreases, the overall crime level is still higher than it was in 1994/95. Also, common robbery is now 90 percent higher than 11 years ago."<sup>3</sup> "The overall crime rate dropped steadily by approximately six percent per year between 2002/03 and 2005/06, but in 2006/07 the decrease slowed to only two percent. Judging from the overall picture, *reported* crime is still on the decrease, albeit at a slower rate than in the three preceding years. . . . But it is undoubtedly the violence associated with crime in South Africa that has had the most negative impact on perceptions of crime and the vulnerability expressed by many."<sup>4</sup>

Reports of violence in communities and in schools are frequent, with elements of xenophobia and racism usually being referred to. Economically, while the country has experienced good and sustained levels of growth, unemployment levels have remained high (25–40 percent) and the gap between the rich and poor has increased enormously. South Africa has the second highest discrepancy between rich and poor in the world. Politically, levels of uncertainty and reduced confidence in government are the highest since 1994. In seeking a frame of reference that takes into account the particular historical legacies we have inherited in South Africa and in seeking to define the points at which we are best able to make a contribution to building our country, the RJC has

recently been greatly influenced by the perspective of John Paul Lederach<sup>5</sup> regarding conflict resolution and Lisa Schirch regarding peace-building. We share the understanding of crime as community destruction that arises from a context of structural violence—when systems, institutions, policies or cultural beliefs meet some people's needs and human rights at the expense of others and that structural violence creates relationships that cause secondary violence to occur.<sup>6</sup>

The validity of this perspective is seen in the RJC's victim-offender conferencing case load from a traditional township area. Assault and serious assault account for 59 percent of the cases. The context of the majority of these cases includes domestic violence as well as disputes over assets and property after a family member has died. Substance abuse and emotional problems also feature strongly.

The response of the media, general public, many sophisticated commentators and, unfortunately, many in the church is to focus on increased use of imprisonment. To address this, the RJC, in partnership with the MCC Regional Peace Network (RPN), has embarked on a film project aimed mainly at the broader church. It will present restorative justice as a present-day application of the full Biblical vision of justice. It will seek to call church members to consider what a Godly response to the present crime situation in South Africa is, to challenge church members to action in the areas of crime and conflict resolution, and to give support to victims and offenders.

Challenges do abound, not the least in securing sufficient funding for restorative justice work and nurturing a pool of appropriate human resources for the work. Specifically, what sort of model can draw on both professional as well as other resources without compromising good practice? To address this need, the RJISA will be commissioning research during 2008. It also recently released a set of practice standards in the form of a toolkit which aims to assist practitioners and those that seek to supervise the quality of restorative justice practice. It is well grounded in international research on appropriate standards, but has also tried to be very practical in the tools developed to answer questions.

Please pray for both civil society leaders and government officials as they seek ways to increase the level of implementation of restorative justice across the entire criminal justice system and in the community.

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## **"Bringing Beauty Out of Ashes"—Victim-Offender Reconciliation**

On the fateful night of this tragedy, Joel was driving late one night with his young children and some of their friends in the car. They were returning home from a birthday party. While stopped at a traffic light, a man (Thabo) walked out in front of the car and collapsed, apparently under the influence of alcohol. Joel had to get out of the car to assist Thabo in order to drive on. Since it was night, Joel took his licensed firearm with him for fear that this might be a crime set-up. When Joel attempted to help, Thabo became belligerent and a tussle ensued that resulted in Joel's firearm accidentally being fired—killing Thabo. Joel, who had never had a criminal record in his life, maintained that the scuffle and the shots arose in the situation and were entirely unplanned. However, the court did not accept his version, and convicted him of murder, which carries a minimum of 15 years prison sentence in South Africa.

As Joel was keen to explain his version of events to Thabo's family, and because they were open to this, the probation officer decided to hold a victim-offender conference that involved all parties. This was a highly emotionally charged encounter which ended in Thabo's family accepting Joel's version of events and his unconditional apology. Peace was re-established between them.

The parties were able to come to an agreement that included Joel paying for Thabo's funeral expenses and for his tombstone. This payment obviously does not bring Thabo back, and is no indication of the value of his life, but it is a tangible way in which Joel can demonstrate that he accepts responsibility for what happened. The agreement also indicated that Thabo's family did not regard Joel as a danger to the community and were not convinced that he needed to be sent to prison. After due consideration, the court imposed a sentence of correctional supervision in lieu of prison.

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## AFRICOM

The Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Peace Committee met in October 2007 and considered the broad topic of MCC and Human Security in Africa. Both Canadian and United States involvement with and in Africa were discussed. Resource extraction was one major topic and the following was another.

On February 12, 2007, USA President George W. Bush announced the formation of a new US Command for Africa (AFRICOM). AFRICOM is to be officially launched in October, 2008. The US Department of Defense and US State Department have launched this new initiative that proposes to bring together, under a central Department of Defense command, US defense, diplomatic and aid relationships in Africa.

The following excerpt from an article by Salim Lone comes from the *Guardian/UK* of March 12, 2007, and is titled "The Last Thing We Need; The New US Command for Africa will Militarize the Continent and Inflamm a String of Regional Conflicts."

For decades, Africa has pleaded in vain for a comprehensive engagement from the West on the basis of shared interests, particularly in the economic arena. But the new engagement the continent has been offered, in the form of a military US command, is the last thing the world's most impoverished continent needs.

The decision to establish AFRICOM reflects the Bush administration's primary reliance on the use of force to pursue its strategic interests. Among the key goals for the new command, for example, is the assurance of oil imports from Africa, which have assumed much greater importance given the hostility to the US presence in the Middle East.

AFRICOM will instead militarize American relations with Africa, and militarize numerous African countries. It will also tilt these countries' policies towards the use of force.

(continued on page 9)

## Notes

1. D. Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness*. Random House, 1999, pp. 218–219.
2. Diversion programs are innovative efforts to "divert" certain offenders and their cases from going through the regular court process. These programs traditionally take the form of probation or various forms of restitution; however, they can also refer to Victim-Offender mediation, going through intensive behavior modification processes, attending education and awareness courses, alternative work service or community service assignments, etc.
3. See Johan Burger, "A Golden Goal for SA: Security arrangements for the 2010 FIFA Soccer World Cup." *SA Crime Quarterly*, No. 19, March 2007.

4. Johan Burger, "Time to take action: the 2006/07 crime statistics." *SA Crime Quarterly*, No. 21, September 2007.

5. John Paul Lederach, *The Little Book of Conflict Transformation*, Intercourse PA: Good Books, 2003.

6. Lisa Schirch, *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, Intercourse PA: Good Books, 2004, pp. 8–24.

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## Education for Change—The Swaziland Church Forum

by Hlob'sile Nxumalo

Swaziland has the highest rate of HIV prevalence in the world and all sectors in the country have been called upon by both the government and church bodies to respond to this crisis. More than 80 percent of the population in Swaziland subscribes to the Christian faith, thus the church has been seen by other sectors as an important partner in the fight against HIV and AIDS. Out of this urgent need and call the Swaziland Church Forum on HIV/AIDS was formed. This body is significant in two ways: 1) It was the first effort to formalize a church-based structure mandated to deal with the public debate and the many and varied conflictual issues that swirl around the church's response to HIV/AIDS in Swaziland, and 2) it is one structure in which all the church bodies are sitting together in unity and attempting to speak with one voice.

Swaziland has traditionally had three church "umbrella" bodies: the League of African Independent Churches, the Council of Swaziland Churches, and the Swaziland Conference of Churches. There are also many independent churches that are not affiliated with any of these three bodies. These multiple organizations are symptomatic of a very divisive historical trail of doctrinal clashes in this small nation, and the church in Swaziland desperately needs a platform from which to speak and act in a unified fashion. In the past, conflicts have arisen from competition as each church

body concentrates on its own activities and programs without cooperating with others. Differences of doctrine and practice have hampered progress, and to date it has been evident that the church is not always speaking in a unified manner. There has been an urgent need for a structure such as the Church Forum to take the lead in orchestrating joint and cohesive action.

In light of the above, Mennonite Central Committee's Regional Peace Network (MCC-RPN) has over the past 12 months been partnering with the Swaziland Church Forum for the dual purposes of empowering the church in its struggle against HIV/AIDS and to build the capacity of the church to handle its own divisions more constructively. As a united body, the Church Forum has been given the unique opportunity to engage the HIV/AIDS pandemic at many levels of society. For instance, the Bishop's Conference recently talked about stigma and discrimination for people living with HIV, and the Prime Minister of Swaziland has invited the national church leaders for breakfast meetings every three months so that he can hear from them on the issues of HIV and AIDS.

The need to engage the Church Forum members to talk to each other on these critical subjects is paramount. In partnership with MCC-RPN, the Church Forum is planning a series of educational workshops in 2008/2009 to look at topics such as team-building,



conflict transformation, Biblical peacebuilding and advocacy for social change. Through these facilitated interventions the Church Forum will be able to address the issue of how to more effectively speak and act in one spirit and with one mind. We need to agree that HIV is affecting our own congregants and relatives, so there is no time to fight about how we are different, but instead ask ourselves how can we work together as the church. At the last Annual General Meeting of the Church Forum, the Coordinator said, "I am asking the delegates to agree that the Board of the Church Forum be representative of all church bodies as it is still difficult to take a decision and say this is what the Church agrees on if all the members are not represented." This is the challenge the Swaziland church faces as it attempts to tackle very difficult conflict issues surrounding HIV and AIDS.

Presently the big struggle that the League of African Independent Churches and the Conference of Churches members are arguing about is whether or not people should stop taking Anti-Retro-Viral (ARV) medications once they have been prayed for. Together with many others, I hope that the Church Forum will be a place where the churches in Swaziland, even with different doctrines, can see HIV/AIDS as a challenge that brings the church together in unity and not as a problem that tears it apart.

*Hlobi Nxumalo works with MCC in Swaziland in the areas of Peace and HIV/AIDS. She shares her time with three Church umbrella organizations and Faith Bible School in Manzini. Hlobi has coordinated the MCC Serving and Learning Together (SALT) program in Swaziland for many years, and is an Associate of the MCC Regional Peace Network.*

## AFRICOM (continued)

It is extremely noteworthy and heartening that the United States government was rebuffed by virtually all African governments in its efforts to establish an AFRICOM base in Africa. Such a base was seen as a neocolonialist move to secure United States oil interests and to counterbalance China's influence.

However, the preparations to make a US Command for Africa operational—likely to be located on the east coast of the United States—continue.

But the combining of defense, diplomatic and aid relationships under a military command is still a cause for concern. Those who receive assistance may well wonder whether every North American donor agency is an extension of efforts by the United States government. This could cause the efforts of relief, development and peace agencies such as MCC to be misunderstood.

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## Ex-combatant Reintegration in South Africa

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by Mpho Matlhakola and Nomfundo Mopagi

There is no universally accepted definition of the term ex-combatant among former liberation armies in South Africa.<sup>1</sup> The South Africa Department of Defense uses the term "military veterans" when referring to ex-combatants.<sup>2</sup> The term thus encompasses former soldiers from the statutory and non-statutory forces. Statutory forces include the former South African Defense Force (SADF) and former Homeland (TBVC) forces. Non-statutory forces include forces from the former liberation movements, i.e., Umkhonto WeSizwe (MK) (armed wing of the African National Congress); Azanian People Liberation Army (APLA) (armed wing of the Pan Africanist Congress); Azanian Liberation Army (AZANLA) (armed wing of the Azanian People's Organization); Self Defense Units (which was incorporated under Umkhonto WeSizwe) and the Self Protection Units (armed wing of the Inkatha Freedom Party).

The demilitarization, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process of ex-combatants in South Africa has faced many challenges. Demobilization is the significant reduction of people employed by the military and their reintegration into civilian life. It includes the reduction of the size of regular military and paramilitary forces, as well as the number of civilian personnel.<sup>3</sup> In

South Africa, demobilization was linked to the process of integration of the statutory and some of the non-statutory armed forces into the South Africa National Defense Force (SANDF) and was aimed solely at ex-combatants from the liberation armies. Demobilization refers narrowly to soldiers from the former liberation forces of MK and APLA who did not meet the standards for integration into the SANDF or who did not wish to integrate.

The demobilization process in South Africa has not effectively provided a holistic reintegration of ex-combatants into society. Successful demobilization, which is linked to a broader program of reconstruction and peace-building, can facilitate development at both the individual and the universal level. The real challenge with demobilization lies in the area of long-term social reintegration. Reintegration is a complex process involving social, material and psychological aspects. Ex-combatants who have spent most of their lives in the military have to find employment and reintegrate into civilian life. Properly planned and managed demobilization is important for rebuilding post-conflict societies. To be effective, demobilization packages may include financial assistance, educational assistance, psychological coun-

**Successful demobilization linked to a broader program of reconstruction and peace-building can facilitate development.**

## Recent Anti-Immigrant Violence in South Africa

During the last half of May, 2008, a wave of attacks broke out against immigrants in Johannesburg, South Africa. By the end of the month, 17,000 people had been displaced by the violence in the city. Many of them took refuge in churches, community halls, and police stations.

MCC provided funds for a local church to purchase and distribute food, water and toiletries, and rented 30 portable latrines.

There was also significant violence in Western Cape province (Cape Town), but much less in the Durban area. Local Durban churches responded by offering shelter and support, and members of the broader faith community—particularly Jewish and Muslim—provided meals, blankets and transportation to shelters. Members of all these groups and the Hindu community met to assess the needs and plan the response. Numbers of civic organizations have united to plan workshops and rallies to call for unity and universal acceptance of all people as a counter to the underlying “xenophobia.”

seling, skills training, human resources conversion, career counseling and job placement, and assistance in securing accommodation. Demobilization which fails to provide for the social integration of ex-combatants poses a potential threat to society through increased political and social instability. Failure to support the reintegration process effectively may lead to increasing unemployment and social deprivation, which could lead to increasing crime rates and political instability. The danger of disgruntled ex-combatants drifting into criminality or even renewed conflict remains a potential threat. Demobilization which is well managed and effectively implemented potentially reduces the security risk which dissatisfied combatants may pose.

To provide ex-combatants with sustainable and meaningful employment means that they are less likely to fall back on the use of weapons to survive or to enrich themselves. Shortage of funds means that governments are investing in short term reintegration programs and that longer term programs are being held back. Therefore governments are having difficulty in the delivery of medium- and long-term reintegration programs due to a lack of resources.

Effective reintegration refers to the implementation of a program that meets the immediate and basic needs of former combatants and empowers the recipients to become self-sufficient in the long term. In this sense, a reintegration package is adequate only if it ensures sustained self-sufficiency.

South Africa, like other countries in transition, finds itself facing a period of major challenges that threaten durable peace.<sup>4</sup> One of these challenges is the continued marginalization and lack of integration of ex-combatants into the mainstream society. Even when they may possess other skills, ex-combatants still have little or no experience at competing in the labor market since most of them took up arms at an early age. This struggle faced by ex-combatants perpetuates the perception that they are a threat to democracy which further feeds into their feelings of marginalization, lack of recognition and stigmatization.

Through its work with ex-combatants, the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR), a partner of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), has found that ex-combatants have great potential to strengthen this young and vibrant democracy. Ex-combatants have continually expressed a desire to contribute to rebuilding their communities and to be part of the broader transformation. As a result CSVR through the

support of Atlantic Philanthropies piloted a project titled “Empowerment through Peace-building.” The project aims to assist ex-combatants to address their experiences of socio-political exclusion and stigmatization. It also provides a channel for ex-combatants to deal with experiences of trauma and militarized identities. MCC Regional Peace Network partnered with CSVR to facilitate a ten-day Foundational Course for Ex-combatants in this project.

The objectives of the Empowerment through Peace-building project are:

- To train ex-combatants to be peace-builders.
- To build linkages with other Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) working in the field of peace-building, and
- To expose ex-combatants to experiential learning through internship placements.

The project aims to bring together ex-combatants from different armed organizations and provide them with conflict transformation and peace-building skills. It also intends to provide psychological and team-building support to trainees, to ensure that they are assisted in addressing their own experiences of violence and trauma and are given an opportunity to confront issues that divide them as ex-combatants.

The project has just completed the first pilot phase in two areas, Gauteng Province and Western Cape Province. The first phase started in January and ended in December 2007. In each area a group of 15 ex-combatants were selected and given peace-building skills. The activities are described below.

**Training**—The training consisted of a ten-day foundation course and two short courses. The foundation course included equipping participants with conflict transformation skills. At the beginning, this proved difficult for ex-combatants as it challenged them to confront their way of thinking and of doing things. The training contributed as they made a journey during the transition period. The short courses were mainly to enhance the peace-building training that participants received, and played a role in equipping them with entrepreneurial skills.

**Internship placements**—Participants were then given experiential learning through a three-month internship placement. These placements served to link them to peace-building NGOs and to provide them with skills. The skills learned during placements included computer skills, conflict analysis, basic conflict transformation, budgeting skills,

basic research skills, community facilitation skills, and basic trauma awareness skills.

**Psychosocial support**—Psychosocial support was made available to participants who were willing to undergo counseling through the CSVr's Trauma and Transition Program.

**Follow up**—The project will provide support to the participants for a period of six months to ensure that the training provided is sustained. Follow-up support will also ensure that participants are given specialized training in areas such as mediation skills.

**Linkages with other organizations**—The project worked through military veterans' associations. Through those associations the project had a leadership structure in place. Those leaders were very helpful in providing support and advice to the project team.

**Evaluation**—The first phase of the project was evaluated from December 2007 to February 2008. Participants reported that the project has had a positive impact on their lives. Most reported having developed healthy relationships with family and friends and now being able to mediate interpersonal conflicts in their immediate communities.

**Seminar**—A seminar was held at the end of January 2008 to highlight the constructive roles that the ex-combatants were playing in their communities. Each participant was given an opportunity to share from their experiences in the project.

The project is working towards developing a workable, replicable model that will be tested in two communities over a period of three years. The model will incorporate the three phases of the project—peace-building training, facilitating internships with local NGOs or local government departments, and providing psychosocial support for ex-

combatants—so that participants are able to provide psychosocial support to their peers.

## Conclusion

The challenges associated with the demilitarization, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process in South Africa have prompted Non-Governmental Organizations to work with ex-combatants. The work tries to address the challenges related to reintegration of ex-combatants into society. CSVr, like other civil society actors, remains committed to do further research and intervention work with ex-combatants. Dealing satisfactorily with former fighters is a critical piece of the puzzle to achieve durable peace.

## Notes

1. Mashike, L. "Some of us know nothing except military skills: South Africa's former guerilla combatants," in *State of the Nation Journal*, 2007. Cape Town: Human Sciences Research Council Press.
2. Military Veterans' Affairs Act, 1999 (Act No. 17 of 1999), *Government Gazette*, 2001.
3. Motsumi, T. and Mckenzie, P. "After the War: Demobilization in South Africa," International Development Research Centre (<http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-68077-201-DO-Topic.html>).
4. "Struggles in Peacetime—Working with ex-combatants in Mozambique: their work, their frustrations and successes," a booklet by the Netherlands Institute for Southern Africa, 2006 ([www.niza.nl/humanrights](http://www.niza.nl/humanrights)).

*Nomfundo Mopagi is Co-ordinator of the Trauma Unit and Mpho Matlhakola is Project Manager for the Peace-Building Unit of the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVr) in Johannesburg, South Africa. Both these women staff the Ex-combatant Reintegration Project.*

**Demobilization which fails to provide for the social integration of ex-combatants poses a potential threat to society.**

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## Mozambique-Sudan Post-War Rebuilding

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by Carl Stauffer

*"They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore." (Micah 4:4)*

In 2007, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) designated funding to facilitate a series of exchange visits between the Sudan and Mozambique Councils of Churches.

The purpose of these learning visits was to share experiences and hold consultations on the role of the Church in rebuilding a nation after protracted violent conflict. A particular interest expressed by the Sudan Council of Churches was the opportunity to explore the experiences, challenges, and understandings gained by the Mozambique Council of Churches in its "Swords into Ploughshares"



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program. This program was a creative initiative that linked disarmament to development by facilitating the exchange of weapons for roofing materials, bicycles, sewing machines, and farming implements. Coupled with this, was the Sudan delegation's goal of learning from the Mozambique Council of Churches about its pivotal role in the removal of land mines in their country.

Since 1954, Sudan has been in a state of almost-continuous civil war—second only to Colombia as the longest recorded civil war in history. In order for the people of Sudan to heal, rebuild and sustain peace within their borders, the country needs to draw from the experience of other African countries that have successfully reconstructed after extended periods of warfare. Mozambique suffered under civil strife for 17 years until its Peace Accord was signed in 1992. It has been able to sustain political peace—three significant elections without violence since 1992—and it also represents a model of effective post-war rehabilitation and reconstruction with an annual economic

growth rate of up to six percent annually. Although Mozambique can still be characterized as a country struggling with its own serious levels of poverty as noted in the UNDP's global economic index, it is a harbinger of hope for nations working at post-war reconstruction.

A highlight of Mozambique's transition is the significant role that the Mozambique Council of Churches (with which MCC has been a long-term partner) has played in national restoration. Hence the Sudan Council of Churches' interest in exploring lessons learned from the Mozambique experience. The MCC-sponsored exchange project initiated in 2007 provided the opportunity for those in Sudan to glean wisdom from the Mozambique Churches and for those learnings to be multiplied during the process of rebuilding. This kind of exchange encourages 'South-South' solidarity in the determination to move from violence to durable peace on the continent of Africa.