

Reconciliation and the Transformation of Conflicts: The Reconciliation and Reconstruction Programme of the Quaker Peace Centre

by

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Research report written for the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, May 2001

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Acknowledgements

I owe gratitude to the people in and around the QPC for letting me share so many interesting moments with them. I will always remember the open and warm atmosphere in this unique work place that I was allowed to study. The research for this case study was conducted between 1997 and 2000, with a core period from September 1999 to February 2000 as a Programme Associate. I was funded by the Heinrich Böll Foundation for my Ph.D. research on the role of non-governmental organisations in the transformation process in South Africa.

This report forms part of a larger research project of the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVr) aimed at a comprehensive analysis of the TRC process in South Africa. Special thanks go to Hugo van der Merwe (CSVr), who made me sum up my findings on the link between mediation as conflict resolution method and reconciliation work in this study. He, as well as Undine Kayser, David Backer and Martin Struthmann (QPC), edited this report and gave me important feedback.

Introduction

South Africa is undergoing a transformation from authoritarian apartheid rule towards democracy and a culture of human rights. Reconciliation and dealing with the past constructively are essential parts of the democratisation and transformation process in South Africa. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) is the most visible example of the complex nature of the process of building a new society.

The Quaker Peace Centre (QPC) was one of the first peace centres in South Africa that fought the struggle for liberation by non-violent means. One of its core programmes is conflict resolution at community level, which ranges from direct intervention in situations of crisis to capacity building through training in mediation for members of disadvantaged communities.

In this case study, the situational context (Section 2), organisational profile (Section 3) and approach (Section 4) of the Reconciliation and Reconstruction Programme of the QPC will be closely examined.¹ As part of a broader study conducted by the Centre for the Study of

Violence and Reconciliation on models of reconciliation work in the South African context, this organisational study highlights the link between conflict resolution and reconciliation work. The underlying assumptions, principles and concepts of the conflict resolution work carried out by the QPC will be discussed with respect to their relevance for reconciliation work (Section 5).

In the ongoing transformation process, the situational context for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) involved in conflict resolution and reconciliation work changes continuously. I will scrutinise the challenges that the Reconciliation and Reconstruction Programme faces and sketch out the potential for the future (Section 6). In the final section, I will elaborate on some general conclusions for conflict resolution and reconciliation in the South African context of transformation and democratisation.

Methodology

The research for this case study was mainly carried out during my stay as Programme Associate in the Mediation Training Programme at the QPC in 1999/2000. Previously, in 1997, I had investigated the conflict resolution work of the Peace Centre, met and interviewed some staff members and observed a series of training workshops. My tasks during the most recent five-months stay included conducting an evaluation and impact assessment of the Reconciliation and Reconstruction Programme as well as some administrative and training activities.²

This study concentrates on conflict resolution work done at the local level, mainly in disadvantaged communities throughout the greater Cape Town metropolitan area. It focuses on the approach of the QPC, which is characterised by direct intervention through mediation, empowerment through mediation training, and the establishment of sustainable structures in the communities that can provide effective conflict resolution in the future.

One of the main objectives of this paper is to highlight the conceptual link between conflict resolution work and reconciliation in the broader sense. A mediation process can be considered as a face-to-face encounter between two or more parties that strives for a common future and therefore has to reconcile their opposing views and their conflict-ridden past. Reconciliation in this context is more than telling one's story to the other; it can also lead to the (re)establishment of a meaningful relationship between the parties involved.

Another objective of this case study is to sketch out and assess the impact of such interventions. Thus, I will examine short and long-term effects on the parties involved and the community at large. Finally, I will discuss the limitations and challenges as well as the potential of this approach.

As a Programme Associate, I was affiliated with the Mediation Training component of the Reconciliation and Reconstruction Programme. For the purpose of this case study it was necessary to address the work done by the Conflict Handling component as well. Historically, both programmes formed one unit, named the Reconciliation and Reconstruction Programme. Therefore, this case study takes the activities of both programmes into close consideration; and it will be argued that they apply an integrated approach of resolving conflicts at the community level. Furthermore, one must ascertain

their linkages with other programmes of the QPC, in addition to cooperation with other NGOs and government structures.

The methodology applied included, firstly, the screening of written material, secondly, participant observation of activities such as programme planning, training workshops, staff development and mediation sessions, and, thirdly, surveying the relevant groups of people who were involved and affected by the work of the two programmes through in-depth interviews and a questionnaire.

Relevant participants and groups identified and covered through interviews included the staff members of the two programmes; staff members of the QPC administration; the mediation trainees (mainly of the 5th training cycle, 1999); the graduated mediators from former training cycles; the clients of the community mediators; the stakeholders in the communities such as civics, community fora, political organisations; the stakeholders in the institutions of local administration, including social services, local councillors and the police; and other NGOs in the field of conflict resolution and development. The media coverage of conflicts in the relevant communities and of the work of the Peace Centre was also taken into account. Despite including people from each of these groups of actors, the sample size was limited due to time constraints and difficulties in accessing the relevant individuals for in-depth interviews.

My role as a Programme Associate has to be critically assessed. On the one hand, participant observation holds the advantage of close contact to the people and the subject matter. In this instance, I had direct access to activities in the field. On the other hand, being a team member also gave me some influence on the shape of the programme and workshops in particular. I had to refrain from using the many opportunities to bring in my own (Western-style) approach to mediation and programme planning.

Furthermore, being viewed as part of the staff had an effect on the data that was presented to me by the interviewees. At times, it negatively affected the result, as respondents seemingly did not always open up and present critical views on the programme and its impact.

Additionally, my role as a foreigner – although acquainted with the broader context of the South African transformation process through several intensive stays in the country in recent years – has to be viewed critically. Language and my different cultural background posed both positive and negative challenges. Awareness of these factors made me try to use them constructively by asking twice for clarifications rather than taking anything for granted. Thus, my outsider perspective holds also the opportunity to detect issues that are overlooked by an insider.

Brief Overview of the Situational Context

There are still some wounds; there is still a cold feeling of war amongst the people. Six years is a very short time to have changed many things and therefore there is still a lot of anger. There are still a lot of conflicts that are going on. (Mbambo, 2000c)

The situational context of the work done by the QPC in the local communities is very complex. Though significant changes for the better have taken effect with respect to the political dispensation and human rights, the daily life of the ordinary South African is still dominated by economic hardship, unemployment (or the fear thereof), violence and crime. Table 1 tries to highlight some of the most pressing needs and issues that lead to conflict in the 'New South Africa', with particular reference to the Western Cape.³

Human Need	Conflict Issue
Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ethnicity as dominant factor of personal identity - Ethnic tensions along the lines of apartheid groupings - Mistrust among and within diverse communities - Enduring racial discrimination and prejudices
Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (Perceived) exclusion from political decision-making process - (Perceived) rise in corruption - Political intolerance (e.g., increase in political violence during the run-up to elections)
Welfare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Widespread poverty and structural violence (e.g., inferior housing, water supply, sanitary facilities, health care and social services, education, high illiteracy rate, lack of recreational facilities, etc.) - Comparatively poor delivery of government's development projects - High unemployment rate especially with respect to the formerly under-privileged groupings - Prevailing poverty-related crime (e.g., serious robbery and petty theft)
Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased sense of insecurity among the public - Comparatively ineffective and poorly resourced police as well as prevailing mistrust and corruption in police - Unaffordable / inaccessible justice system - High rate of violent crime (e.g., murder, rape and family violence) - Outbreaks of gangsterism, gang wars and taxi violence - Prevailing culture of violence

These needs and issues of conflict are often intertwined and form a vicious cycle. A graduated community mediator from Manenberg, himself an ex-gang leader, describes the hostile environment that shapes the work of the mediators as follows.

As you drop a stone into a pool of water and you watch the ripples from the centre point. The centre point of the pool is the unemployment. As the ripple expands out the stress starts in the family, the fighting starts, the drinking, the using of dope, and so it spreads out. And so it affects the children – from the parents to the children. And so you get the children turning to the streets, becoming little criminals.

Because the whole thing, not only in Manenberg but ... everywhere, it goes around survival, trying to get what you need out of life, the basic needs of life.

...

Now this kid sees you driving around with a car, have a cell phone but you're a gangster. Now you become a role model for that kid. Because that kid wants to

dress like you. He also wants to wear a Calvin Klein T-shirt, genuine Calvin Klein T-shirts or jeans or whatever, you name it. He also wants to have a gold earring now. He also wants to have his fingers full of gold rings, gold bracelets and chains around you. He also wants a cell phone. He also wants a BMW. So that makes that kid a prime target for you, the gangster, the dealer. ...

Now we have a very, very serious problem out there. Because as I told you a few minutes ago, if you can watch the children play in the townships, their whole way of playing, it has a destructive manner about it. It's just little kids. I'm talking about kids between the ages of two, three, four, five, six, seven. Just to watch them play, their way of playing, the games that they play are of a destructive nature. Why? It is the influence of the environment. ...

Now that is what we have to cope with as mediators in Manenberg. (N.H., 2000)

Organisational Profile

Reconciliation at Quaker Peace Centre was there before the TRC [Truth and Reconciliation Commission]. (Mbambo, 2000b)

The QPC started informally as a group of concerned members of the Religious Society of Friends by supporting self-help projects, facilitating medical care and engaging in crisis interventions.⁴ After 1980, this commitment acquired a more structured form when the first peace worker was appointed who served as a facilitator in townships "assisting local communities to grow toward independence and self-empowerment" (QPC, 1993, p. 2). The increasing demand for this informal support led to the official launch of the office of the QPC in Quaker House in Cape Town in October 1988.⁵

In 1994, Ann Oglethorpe, the Director at that time, portrayed the image of QPC as being a "small boat" that is trying to steer in the "stream" of events. She envisioned that the Peace Centre could play an important role in the transition from apartheid to democracy and a multicultural society:

The Quaker roots and tradition, vision for the future and quiet ways of putting faith in action, is the rudder that is steering us through tumultuous times. ...

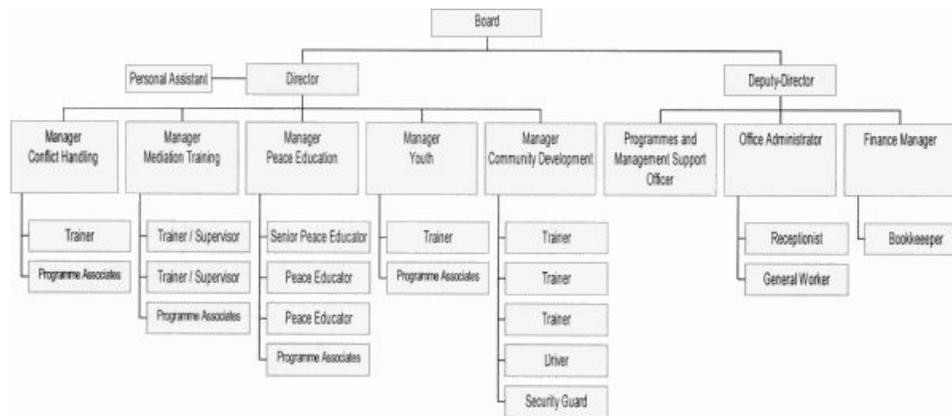
What is then going to become of this strong river on which we are afloat? Do we have any influence over it? Can we direct the flow? What is our role to be? **Let the river flow** - we do not wish to stem the tide. But as it flows, and in some instances destroys and washes away and in others brings refreshment and nourishment, we are finding a way of healing some of the wounds, of bringing hope where there has been despair, strengthening and nurturing the growth and confirming new directions hesitatingly taken. I see this great torrent subsiding and dividing into many rivers and smaller streams where the quiet working ways of the QPC can be of benefit. (QPC, 1994, p. 8)

These circumstances, and a period of general uncertainty for NGOs and civil society as a whole, led to a diversification of QPC's programmes and projects. In 1999/2000, the services rendered by QPC were the following: Community Development, Rural Support,

Youth, Peace Education, and the two programmes that are the subjects of this case study, Conflict Handling and Mediation Training (see Figure 1).

The QPC operates with an annual budget (1999) of almost R 5 000 000 and has 28 staff members, an additional 15 contract workers and Programme Associates, as well as about 30 volunteers during the year.

A board, consisting of about 19 members, supervises the activities. Board members come mainly from the local Quaker community but a diversification of board memberships is underway, with more and more people drawn from other churches and beliefs, as well as from the communities with which the Centre works.



Despite the subdivision of the Reconciliation and Reconstruction Programme into Conflict Handling and Mediation Training, they are still considered to be interconnected, not least because of formal links and lines of cooperation such as fortnightly programme meetings. These two components aim to reconcile people of different opinions, faiths and cultures by bringing them together through intervention and mediation. The people who were disadvantaged and discriminated against are viewed as its main beneficiaries and foremost partners (QPC, 1997, p. 9).

The Approach of the Reconciliation and Reconstruction Programme

The overarching aims of the QPC are expressed in the latest versions of the mission statement and the vision.

Mission Statement: The Quaker Peace Centre is a team of peacemakers and development practitioners from different backgrounds. We work with people towards building a better society, which fosters the creative and non-violent resolution of conflict, participatory development and the respect of self and others. We do this through awareness raising, capacity building and the development of sustainable peace models. (QPC, 1999b, p. 13)

Our Vision: We have a vision of ourselves as a team of peacemakers working towards a future in which we live in harmony with our neighbours and where women and children can walk the streets free from fear. We see a future in which a culture of learning and teaching presides in our schools and where

nurturing self-discipline, mutual respect and peace education are the norm; where a wide understanding of skills enables people to find peaceful alternatives for resolving conflicts where our youth look forward with enthusiasm and confidence to shaping their future; where poverty is eradicated and where the unemployed and marginalised can care for their own families, create their own jobs and find employment. We see a gun-free future where South Africa exports peacemaking skills rather than weapons, where restorative justice is widely practised, a spirit of reconciliation prevails. (QPC, 2000, p. 38)

The vision and mission statements are translated into a vast array of aims and activities carried out by the various programmes. Table 2 offers a clearer picture of the approach and the activities carried out by the two programmes under scrutiny here. Stated in a logical and comprehensive order, the key aims of the two programmes are summarised and linked to specific actions.

The table shows that the key aims and activities follow a well-defined order and aim at creating a sustainable infrastructure for constructive conflict resolution at the local level. The approach can be considered as a strategic response framework. It is sketched out in the following flow-chart and starts with a sound analysis of the conflict.

Table 2: Approach of the programmes

Aims	Activities	
To diagnose conflicts in local communities	Analysis	Community Conflict Analysis
To mediate in deep-rooted conflicts in local communities	Direct Intervention	Conflict Intervention
To empower community structures in handling conflicts constructively	Training	Training for Community Structures: Conflict Handling, Leadership Skills, ...
To provide skills in resolving conflicts peacefully		Training for Community Members: Mediation, Life Skills, ...
To assist in practical application of conflict resolution skills		Fieldwork/Supervision
To assist in acquiring practical, income-generating skills		Skills Training for Community Members/Referral to Skills Training Organisations
To increase capacity in order to spread the use of non-violent means of resolving conflicts	Capacity Building	Train the Trainers

To assist in the establishment of organisational structures that promote and carry out effective conflict resolution in local communities	Institutionalisation	Community Mediators' Association
To assess and improve own approach	Research	Research: Evaluation, Impact Assessment, ...

First one has to do a community profile and check what are the assets of that community and then make use of those assets. Assets in the community are the leadership, [i.e.] street committees, households, and, if there are, businesses as well. (Dayile, 2000)

After this initial needs analysis, direct interventions are carried out in order to re-establish peace (peace making) and to build a base for activities that enable the communities to solve their conflicts themselves.

[Direct intervention by the Conflict Handling Programme is? the sharp point of a pen. In any areas, Conflict Handling is the first part to enter in a conflict area for intervention.

We start by intervening in a community, then once everything is stable the rest of the [Centre] can come and empower that community [as] a follow-up. (Dayile, 2000)

The first step in such an empowerment programme is to offer workshops and training in mediation and conflict handling. Other QPC programmes, like Peace Education, may supplement the approach.

[This] is our main strong point: Take those people and give them training, that is, to empower them so that they can be able to own the mediation process. ... After the conflict has been resolved ... we stick with that community. (Dayile, 2000)

The direct intervention of the Conflict Handling team is a peace-making effort aimed at halting the violence and transforming the conflict constructively. However, these interventions by the QPC are only the start. Moreover, they have a rather short-lived effect if they are not supplemented by peace-building efforts. Sustainable peace can be built by empowering the communities to solve their future conflicts constructively themselves.

The Mediation Training Programme endeavours to promote more sophisticated empowerment by training locals as community mediators during a five-month course. The success of the course rests on three pillars.

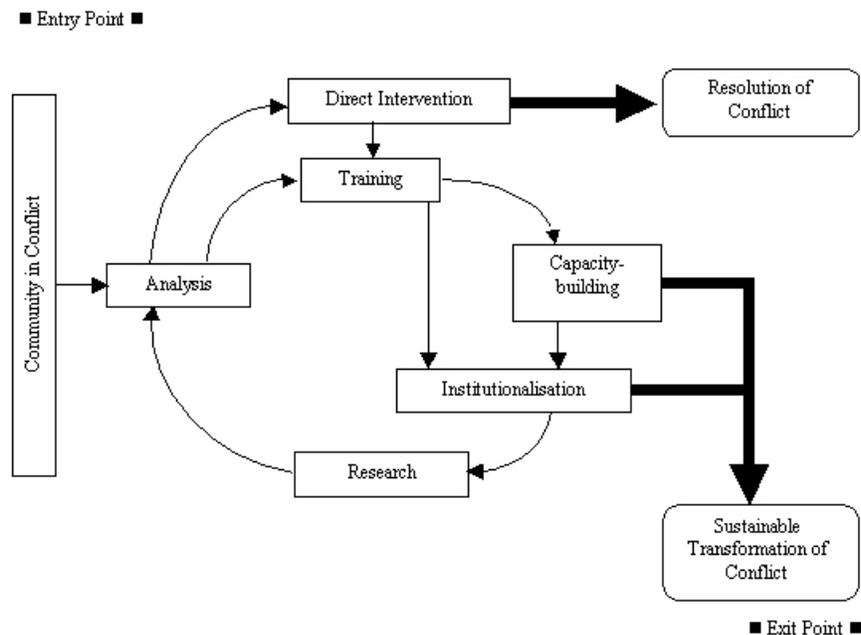
The first is the training itself. Fourteen workshop sessions are offered. Each lasts a whole day, and the sequence usually takes place in a fortnightly cycle. About 20 – 25 people from disadvantaged communities are selected for the course. One of the most important selection criteria is that these community members are active and respected. This is ensured by a close cooperation with community structures, like SANCO and street committees, which

encourage and recommend certain individuals.

The curriculum of the training includes basic and advanced mediation, other conflict handling styles as well as processes, and related skills, such as communication, facilitation and basic counselling. Furthermore, the participants are familiarised with life and leadership skills, which serve them well in their daily struggles. Referrals is another topic that is of utmost importance since not all cases can be mediated and external resources and institutions like helplines, social services or the police have to be contacted in cases that are beyond petty crime (e.g. rape or murder). Last but not least, report writing is covered in the training since monthly reports on the cases handled are expected from the trainee community mediators. Additionally, issues like group dynamics and other environmental aspects, which play a role in conflicts (e.g. gender awareness or women and child abuse), are dealt with in the training workshops.

The second pillar of the mediation training is the practical work the mediators carry out in their own communities. As mentioned above, the trainees come from community structures and have been active in their community well before the training. They are expected to practise the mediation skills they learnt while continuing these activities.

Through supervision by QPC fieldworkers – the third pillar of the training – it is ensured that they can discuss problems they encounter in their practical mediation work, learn from their mistakes and gradually improve their skills. In their written monthly reports, the trainees are required to describe the cases handled and to reflect on successes, failures and insights.



Capacity building through training of trainers was added to the programme only in 2000. Graduated mediators and other qualified and active people are trained in advanced mediation and facilitation skills. The aim is to create a pool of trainers who can take over the mediation training of QPC and transfer the skills to the community directly.

Under the heading "institutionalisation" (see Figure 2 above), I subsumed another step that aims to create a sustainable base for constructive conflict resolution in local communities. Recently, QPC has sought closer cooperation with government structures like the Justice Department. In some areas, community mediators work closely with the local police stations. So-called "petty cases" are often referred by the police to be handled by the community mediators. In some instances, the police even provide offices at the police station for use by the mediators.

As early as 1995, mediation trainees discussed the establishment of an organisation that is run by the community mediators themselves. Important tasks, such as accreditation and setting of standards for community mediators, monitoring of community mediators and income generation, were identified. In early 1998, the Community Mediators' Association was founded as an independent body. The link to QPC remains strong and fertile. QPC refers cases and other tasks like voter education to the association and assists them when problems arise. The manager of the Conflict Handling Programme emphasises the significance of this institutionalisation as part of an exit strategy of QPC.

As mediation is taking place, the Mediator's Association is monitoring them while we are also monitoring them. That gives us a breathing space to be able to be exploring other areas and assisting other areas also. (Dayile, 2000)

QPC enters a community to directly intervene, transfer its skills and thereby to build the capacity of the local residents in resolving their conflicts themselves. QPC exits the community when the conflict resolution capacity is sufficiently developed and organised. Closing the circle, research on the activities in that community is conducted to assess and improve the whole approach and to feed into any new activities in newly targeted areas. This cyclical approach is informed by action-learning which is also applied in the training mentioned earlier.

We are using a lot of experiential learning, this action learning. So we evaluate after we have done a workshop and you see where you have gone wrong. Then you improve next time. ...
We believe, if in one street can be one mediator, really there could be peace.
(Nxusani, 2000)

The approach of the QPC aims at people from the street or grassroots level. Consequently, grassroots leaders – people who are active in their communities – are approached and selected for the training.

[The community mediators] come from a community structure. Coming from a community structure, it means that they will have to go back to that structure which recommended them for mediation training. Because when we recruit, we recruit people from community structures. We ask these community structures to actually recommend some people who they think could be of ... use to them in future. This person must be an active ... community worker within the community – someone who is already working, and someone who is seen as a person who can actually help other people. (Mbambo, 2000a)

As opposed to top-down or middle-level approaches, focussing on the grassroots leaders holds important advantages. Grassroots leaders have the most immediate contact to the people in conflict and therefore have a deeper understanding of the situation, the life of the people and the local context and history of the conflict (Lederach, 1997, pp. 42-43). This is captured in the words of one of the community mediators:

That is the advantage I have of walking the streets, [other] than you sitting in an office. Because I get closer to the problem. I get right into the problem, into the core of the problem. (N.H., 2000)

However, there are also problems and disadvantages with such a grassroots approach. Party politics is a problematic issue: the political affiliation of community leaders must be taken into account, since tensions can arise if such leaders are not perceived as neutral mediators. One of the fieldworkers describes how carefully community mediators have to be selected:

When you enter the community, you must start with the key people. But if you've missed that, and you can miss it, you know, with the politics in the locations [townships] – there are a lot of organisations there. If, unfortunately, you went to the ANC office and present your case that you are mediators – we are training mediators in the community – and if that goes to the community with the ANC, then other people will not come and join because they will say it's an ANC thing. ...

So when you enter the community, it's either you go to the leaders of SANCO because they say that they are not politically aligned and then also to the development forums so that you can recruit from those people. (Nxusani, 2000)

Another disadvantage of focussing on the grassroots level is that their social position implies that their powers are limited, that contact to the top level is virtually non-existent and, therefore, the impact of their interventions is usually restricted to the local level. An impact on a greater scale or national level can only be achieved by a supplementary strategy that targets the government or the general public. For instance, the above-mentioned efforts to institutionalise community mediation in cooperation with the local police stations have to be combined with a lobbying strategy that targets the relevant government department. A police officer who was trained in mediation himself and worked closely with other community mediators in his area highlights this problem:

In the police, anything that came from down up is not being weighed up. You see, but any information that comes from up down, then it is listened to so well. So now, as a person on the grassroots level, that I can tell them [the higher levels] about this [community mediation], it will take time. I'm not saying that they won't listen to me, but it will take [more] time than [if] the information came from top to bottom. (S.O., 2000)

Key Concepts

The approach and work carried out by the Reconciliation and Reconstruction Programme of the QPC is based on a number of conceptual assumptions and principles. This section highlights the most important ones with respect to the mediation and conflict handling and

its link with reconciliation. The key concepts stated below have not been comprehensively compiled before, nor are all of them explicitly noted in existing written material. Their relevance to the QPC's approach and practical work is, however, evident from the interviews conducted with facilitators and community mediators.

On a general level, these basic ideas in understanding conflict and human nature inform not only the approach but also the day-to-day activities of the staff members, trainees and graduated community mediators.

Conflict is not, per se, negative

Conflict – what an opportunity

Our understanding of conflict influences how we approach conflict and its resolution.

Conflict is:

- An outgrowth of diversity and as such conflict is not always negative.
- Common, natural and unavoidable.

(QPC, 1999c, p. 21)

The chapter on "Understanding Conflicts" in the QPC's training manual for community mediators starts off with a key underlying assumption: conflicts are not, per se, negative. The outcome of a conflict can either be negative/destructive or positive/constructive. In order to achieve the latter result, constructive conflict resolution techniques, rather than destructive means, need to be applied. Thus, conflicts are seen as an opportunity; new and better solutions to problems can be found.

One of the graduated community mediators described his understanding of conflicts and the need for addressing it appropriately as follows:

Conflict ... is healthy. Because we live with the conflict, we cannot run away from that. (U.O., 1999)

The light of God in every person

The QPC operates with few Quakers amongst their staff members. Preaching the Quaker beliefs is not considered part of the training or mission in general. Nevertheless, staff members seem to be very receptive to the underlying philosophy, which is rooted in the pacifistic notion of the 'Good' in every person. Even the seemingly evil person – e.g. the criminal who carries out evil deeds – is viewed as a human being who has the light of God within him/her, and therefore has the opportunity to change and enact his/her divine nature.

An early expression of this core belief is the peace testimony against war and for conciliation in the 1660 declaration to Charles II (Declaration, 1660). Quakers refused to take up arms and committed themselves to direct their efforts toward human reconciliation.

⁶ The term conciliation "has been used interchangeably with reconciliation to cover a wide range of activities intended to bring persons to a closer understanding and to make a more

harmonious and constructive climate for human fulfilment" (Yarrow, 1978, p. xxi – xxii).

The Quaker philosophy is presented at the beginning of a five-months training cycle in a one- to two-hour session. Other Quakers from the Western Cape region are asked to tell the trainees more about their spiritual motivation for conflict resolution and reconciliation work.

[The Quakers] do believe very strongly that each person is made in the image of God and that within each person there is the light of God within. ...

And in terms of relating to evil, this is absolutely essential When he runs into evil things that are happening the Quaker is absolutely central in the belief that a person – no matter how evil they are behaving – they have the ability to change. Within them is the light of God, which can be listened to. If you can somehow contact that within that person ... they do have the ability to transform. ... The Quaker approach to peace is the enemy comes as a person with a hostile intent, and they are coming expecting you to stand and to fight, and you turn and say: "I understand that you have your needs What are your needs? I'll do what I can to help you." And that is what changes the whole thing. ...

A communal spirit that values each person is the essential foundation. It's not easy to maintain in the face of real pressure, interests and divisive forces. ... If you truly adopt the view that God is in every person that applies to your opponent – to the oppressor – as well. With that realisation comes the path to ... true respect for every person in a way that does not excuse or condone evil but also does not deny the humanity and spark of vital life and possibility for change even in those who are carrying out the worst deeds. This is the real test and the real foundation. (Ellis, 2000)

Apart from this once-off introduction, Quaker beliefs do not feature explicitly again in the training. This key concept, however, serves as a spiritual base and links up with the notions of reconciliation and restorative justice promoted throughout the QPC's programming.

Reconciliation [or mediation] is about getting people to come together and talk about their issues and find solutions in a more constructive manner; in a manner they can live with, in a manner they themselves come up with [the solution]; not you as a facilitator or not you as a mediator saying that you are going to find the answers. ... It is their conflict and therefore they must find the solution to the conflict. (Mbambo, 2000b)

Mediation is guided by various basic principles. I highlight three that have particularly significant implications for any process of conflict resolution and reconciliation.

Staying neutral/impartial/non-partisan

Mediation is a third-party intervention in which the mediator is responsible for facilitating communication between two conflicting parties in an effort to resolve their dispute. The mediator is not a judge or arbitrator who defines and decides what is wrong and what is right, or which solution is the best. He or she is required to stay neutral (QPC, 1999c, p. 42) or impartial (QPC, 1999c, p. 30).

Recently theorists and practitioners prefer the term non-partisan, because the mediator is not supposed to favour any of the parties. However, the mediator is not strictly neutral, but employs certain guiding normative concepts like the ones mentioned in this section. Most important, he or she has to uphold the idea of fair and balanced communication and constructive conflict resolution. In addition, the values of human respect and constructive communication are non-negotiable. One of the conditions for a successful mediation is, therefore, the commitment by the parties involved to these basic values.

Participating voluntarily

Everybody involved in a conflict is free to decide if they want to engage in a mediation process. This freedom is exercised during the entire duration of the mediation; any party is free to withdraw from the process at any time. If a party is not willing to engage in a constructive dialogue, facilitated by a third party, or does not agree with some basic principles or rules, mediation will not be productive.

This principle extends even to the mediator, who reserves the right to end his or her involvement. This could be the case if the mediator's values are violated by the actions of the parties. Another example is related to the principle of non-partisanship: if the mediator feels that he or she is too involved in the conflict or the emergent issues and cannot stay impartial towards all parties, a professional mediator should withdraw.

The concept of inclusiveness is also vital to the success of any mediation process. Other conflict intervention techniques try to bridge the rift between the parties and can deal with them separately or even without reaching out to all parties involved in the conflict. Mediation, however, is based on the idea that all relevant parties come together and share their perceptions of the conflict and ideas for a solution. Only then can all aspects of the conflict be discussed and resolved constructively.

In line with the concept of restorative justice, the QPC aims not only at including the immediate parties to the conflict, like the perpetrator and victim of an offence. They consider the families of the perpetrator and the victim, as well as the community at large, to be among those affected by the offence and therefore parties who ought to be included in any process intent on finding a sustainable solution.

In essence, the mediation process is comprised of five phases: preparation, introduction, storytelling, problem-solving and agreement. During the preparation phase, or "pre-mediation", the third party meets with the conflicting parties and tries to establish a climate of trust and cooperation. Having obtained their agreement on engaging in a mediation process, a formal introductory phase brings the parties together to start the mediation. During this phase, the ground rules and principles are explained again and an explicit commitment by the conflict parties is required before proceeding any further.

The next stages aim at (re)creating direct and constructive communication between the adversaries. By telling their stories to each other, their various perceptions, feelings, interests and needs are brought to the surface. A better understanding of each other – and the problem itself – can be reached, which clarifies not only differences but also commonalities and possible solutions. In the agreement stage, the best solution that has been generated is selected by the parties and usually written up in some kind of contract.

Additionally, the implementation and the monitoring of the agreement by the mediator can be regarded as phases six and seven of a mediation process. The following key concepts relate to these phases and to the activities carried out during the progressive re-building of the relationship between the adversaries.

During the story-telling phase, each party is granted the opportunity to relate their story, i.e., their perception of the conflict and the issues involved, including the positions taken and the needs and interests behind these. Furthermore, the parties are encouraged to share their emotional responses. The other parties are asked to listen carefully and not to interfere or to start arguing, granted that they receive the same opportunity and attention when they tell their story.

But during the mediation, that is whereby everybody must tell exactly their story, and you can listen to the story and you can paraphrase exactly what she was trying to say, and after that we can discuss in order to harmonise the situation; just to bring about harmony. (U.O., 1999)

Many people's stories in post-apartheid South Africa are still untold or unheard. The chance to speak freely is a rare opportunity. Many have to learn to open up and talk for themselves, but with the facilitation of a trained third party the necessary lines of communication can be established. Through the intervention of a mediator, the playing field is levelled; the powerful, talkative and eloquent are obliged to listen to the soft-spoken, shy and quiet ones. By posing open questions and rephrasing the statements of the parties, the background of the conflict gets illuminated.

Tackling the roots, the past

The conflicts that might be coming up might be coming as a result of what happened years ago, twenty years ago. You do not [only] look at what is happening now. Where is this coming from? What are the roots of that conflict?

...

The past cannot be buried. History lives to be told in many years to come.
(Mbambo, 2000b)

The past – and not only the immediate conflict situation – features very prominently in the mediation process. In order to come to terms with the present and build a sustainable future, the historical context of conflict and the parties to the conflict have to be closely examined. During the story-telling phase, the mediator guides the parties to return to the roots of the conflict: How did their relationship begin and what was it like? How did they deal with this and other problems in the past before the conflict escalated? The mediator investigates by posing questions that illuminate the background, history and roots of the conflict. The "truth" of each party to the conflict must be discovered so that the opposing party can be exposed to different interpretations and perceptions of the underlying conflict and its causes.

The past is considered the key to the future. Not only does the current conflict have its roots in the past, but also the future solution relates to the historical background.

Talking about the past is often an emotionally laden and painful experience for the parties.

Feelings like pain and fear come up repeatedly, yet they need to be expressed. The mediator not only has to generate a warm and open atmosphere, but also has to intervene if the feelings take over and constructive communication is endangered. However, the stirred-up emotions about the past are not silenced, but rather paraphrased in order to be understood and tolerated as legitimate recollection and revelation.

Mediation [can be regarded] as a ventilation period whereby a person can cough [up] what he wants to say during the mediation process. (U.O., 1999)

In the imagery used by one of the community mediators, the past seems to strangle the parties to the conflict and they need to "cough up" – i.e., to spit it out – in order to take a breath of fresh air.

Another well-known image is that of the "wounds" of the past. If wounds did not heal and are still open and "infectious", they leave their mark on the current conflict. It is the task of the mediator to assist the parties in curing these wounds of the past by getting the poison out, and eventually permitting them to heal.

In the process, the parties learn to listen to each other's stories (again), which can entail being exposed to sharply contrasting views and perceptions of the conflict, its history and the issues involved. The listening has to be considered as progress since the adversaries, sometimes for the very first time, get to know more about the other side. A decisive element for the success of mediation is to instil a sense of tolerance with regard to such differences – to confront oneself with the perspective of the other and to question one's own opinion and interpretation. It needs to be understood that difference does not have to be eliminated and diversity can be tolerated or even embraced.

Concerning the core of the conflict, it is essential to reach a common understanding of each other and of the conflict. Yet, understanding in this sense does not mean that different interpretations are discussed to the point where there is no difference left. On the contrary, understanding each other pays respect to diversity and tolerates differences. The aim is rather to raise awareness of the different interpretations and to accept their legitimacy.

The conflicting views have to be acknowledged by all parties. To reach complete agreement on all issues and create full uniformity of opinions is utopian. Therefore, common understanding refers to the exchange and tolerance of differences.

Harmonising the relationship of adversaries

But during the mediation ... everybody must tell exactly their story ... and after that we can discuss in order to harmonise the situation; just to bring about harmony. (U.O., 1999)

By (re-)establishing the lines of communication between the conflicting parties, the relationship is transformed from being disruptive, destructive and adversarial into a more constructive and harmonious one. Differences are discussed and tolerated; understanding and cooperation prevail over divisive issues.

The interaction between the parties themselves intensifies in a constructive manner. This

also affects the community at large by breaking the cycle of violence. Although the impact of the two programmes is discussed in detail in the following chapter, the effect on relationships in general is highlighted by the manager of the Mediation Training Programme.

For example, with regard to the aim to further cooperation between the community mediators and the local police, the relationship between the community and the police improves significantly through trust-building:

But what I'm very happy about is that, you know, a good working relationship is [in] development between the police and the community, you know. So that the community can report, you know, any matters that bother them to the police; and the police can also rely on the community because policing is not a one-sided job. It needs the cooperation of the community. (Mbambo, 2000a)

During the final stages of the mediation process, understanding and tolerating each other's differences is translated into a shared vision of a common future. The other side is not excluded from one's own life anymore; all are not only considered but integrated. The solution to the conflict of the past and present is to open up a future in which all parties live together in peace, i.e., conflict issues are transformed and future conflicts are handled constructively while remaining differences can be tolerated.

On a relational level, the adversaries should become partners. On a structural level, this common future has to be built on a dispensation that is more just and peaceful. The conflict can only be considered "solved" if the relationships as well as the structural inequalities are permanently transformed. The concept of a common future, therefore, envisages further transformation and development:

We will make peace and maintain it and build on it. It will allow us to move forward with development. It will allow us to look at other issues related to the development of the community, including social activities, including sending children out to school, including actually creating employment, opening opportunities, opening the doors for ourselves [as black people]. That is my understanding of reconciliation. (Mbambo, 2000b)

Repairing the damage done [restorative justice]

A successful mediation not only deals with the past and creates a common future, but also tries to heal the wounds of the past and to repair the damage done. The intention of the perpetrator to deliver some kind of reparation, as well as the willingness of the victim to forgive, are crucial in this respect.

We have been dealing with the cases that not only see mediation as a lasting solution to the problem but further include some form of reparation and forgiveness to satisfy both parties. I'm briefly going to tell you a story of one of the cases that we have dealt with. A young man who was employed in a garage stole an engine. And an engine is worth a lot of money. He went and sold it for about R200 because he needed money. He needed money for drugs, he needed money for food. And when the

employer found out, he called all the employees. And eventually this young man was discovered – that he has taken this engine – and he was expelled. And when he was expelled, he knew there was a mediator close to him. He went to the mediators and the mediators said: "What happened?" The young man did not tell the mediators that he stole the engine, and they went to the employer. The employer said: "He stole my engine which is worth thousands of Rands." And he asked him: "Did you do that?" He said: "Yes." "Now, you are telling us a different story now. Where is the engine?" "I sold it."

And during the process of mediation, the employer understood why this young man had stolen the engine. And the young man said: "I wish to repair that engine." And the employer said: "I wish to take him back to his job." And he said: "I wish to look at his wages and make sure that I give him enough so he does not do it again." And the young man said: "I want to re-pay this money in instalments that can afford me to live." And together they owned that process, and they found a way of resolving the process. And today this young man is very happy at work, and the employer is happy.

But in addition to that, he had to apologise not only to the employer but to other employees. And they forgave him. And that was the process of restorative justice. And that's what we are doing in the community. And mediation alone has sometimes been not sufficient to resolve conflict. We are gradually realising that restorative justice, in which the offender may offer to do something extra to repair the relationship after the mediation, tends to restore peace and harmony and allows people to live as normal as before.

Restorative justice, therefore, requires that the victim, their supporters, [and] the community give an opportunity to the offender to amend their wrong acts. That the offenders acknowledge their mistakes and not only promise but assure their victims and all stakeholders that the offence will not be repeated. (Mbambo, 2000c)

The mediation approach of the QPC is conceptualised as a process that aims at restorative justice and reconciliation. The conflict is not only managed or a conflict issue solved, but the relationship of the adversaries is altered from one of resentment and hostility to one of friendship and harmony.

A settlement by force usually only lasts until the underdog gains power and is able to fight for a reversal of the situation. The lasting success of a mediation, however, is ensured through the application of the above-mentioned principles. Conflict offers the opportunity for constructive change and progress for all parties involved. If all parties participate voluntarily and as equals in the process, the likelihood of achieving a mutually beneficial solution is evident. An impartial intervener can assist the parties to overcome their adversarial relationship and their destructive ways in dealing with conflict. Mediation is designed as a process of telling one's story and listening to one another's stories. It is aiming at discovering the "truth" of each party and acknowledging the fundamental human needs and emotions that are essential parts of each party's story. The mediator designs communication as self-reflexive in order to challenge the interpretations and perceptions of the other party as the cause of all trouble. One's own role and influence in the escalation of the process is uncovered and put into perspective. By acknowledging and accepting one's own responsibility, the path to reconciling with each other opens up. On the relationship level, empathy is increasingly replacing resentment and misperception.

Out of the recognition of one's own responsibility grows not only a sincere motivation to apologise and to commit oneself not to repeat the harm, but also, on the structural level, to redress of the material and emotional damage. The past injuries and grievances are addressed, as far as possible, by finding solutions that try to repair the damage done and implement structural changes that help prevent the conflict from recurring.

Mediation aims at achieving justice not by forceful and punitive measures (retributive justice) but by mutually agreed and understood measures like redress, compensation, redistribution and transformation on the structural level as well as acknowledgement, recognition, commitment and rebuilding on the relationship level (restorative justice).

Assessing the Impact of the Reconciliation and Reconstruction Programme

To measure the impact of a specific action in the social sphere is a difficult task. Social life is complex and a specific treatment (e.g. a mediation workshop) is only one of the many factors that influence the behaviour of individuals exposed to this treatment.

Despite these limitations, cautious statements can be made about the effects of QPC's work on people's lives based on the interviews conducted. In fact, the impact of the activities of the two programmes is manifold, and the effects on people's lives can be observed at various levels. One can distinguish between consequences for the people directly involved in a training activity or mediation session, and the impact on the community at large. Furthermore, I will look at both immediate and longer-term effects. Table 3 offers an overview of some distinctive effects of the work carried out by QPC.

On a personal level, the mediation trainees report that they sense some kind of personal growth. They feel more self-confident and more determined to solve their own problems as well as those of others in their community.

I gained a lot. ... I [was] very short-tempered and I [sat] very quiet in a meeting. I hardly [spoke] before I did the course. And I always [kept] issues to myself, too scared to raise it in a meeting. And I wasn't neutral where some cases were concerned. But when I came on board with the course I learnt that. And I've learnt it very, very hard. And I work in a way now, the way I learnt the skills of a mediator. So it's a lot of pressure inside of me that went down. I'm working neutral. I'm not taking sides. And I know when I sit in a meeting not to keep quiet – I can also raise my voice now. That's a lot I've learnt from this course. And I am very grateful for it. (S.M., 1999)

Table 3: Impact model

	Short-term effects	Long-term effects
Effects on parties involved	Constructive Transformation of Conflicts - Mediation alleviates specific conflict situations - Mediation has ameliorated the	Role-modelling - Mediation serves as an example to the parties involved Human Capacity building

	<p>plight of the victim</p> <p>Relationship building (Conflict Parties & Trainees)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improving relationships between individuals and groups - Increasing teamwork across community lines <p>Awareness raising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Training made people aware of issues affecting them <p>Personal Growth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participants feel more confident 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Training has uplifted the lives of participants by providing them with skills that they can utilise - Higher qualification for the job market and better chances to find employment <p>Empowerment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Training made participants do something about their problems rather than to wait and cry for someone else to do something about them - Participants are able to approach relevant organisations or individuals about the issues that affect them - Participants are able to sort out their own problems
<p>Effects on broader community</p>	<p>Furthering Community Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decision-makers have been equipped with the skills to do so in a way that is most beneficial to the individuals of that community <p>Relationship building (Conflicting Sections of Community) - Improving relationships between individuals and groups</p> <p>Organisation building - Organisational structures develop that are promoting the peaceful resolution of conflicts</p> <p>Rising Recognition by Community for QPC - People are aware of the services QPC is offering</p>	<p>Multiplying Effect/Role-modelling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participants become resourceful to other people in similar situations - Mediation skills are passed on to other people in the community - Future leaders are familiarised with conflict handling skills <p>Fulfilment of Security Needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Effective resolution of conflicts provides residents with sense of security <p>Conflict Prevention</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implementation of community projects is being handled by all parties with less conflict <p>Rising Esteem by Community for QPC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People begin to feel comfortable about approaching QPC for assistance

In addition to this personal development, human capacity building can be traced as a long-term effect. The training in mediation and other skills has uplifted participants' lives. This effect becomes most obvious in the number of people who carry on as community mediators or who find formal employment after the training course. Some have obtained jobs closely related to mediation work and conflict handling – for example, as lay assessors and counsellors at family courts, as well as security personnel within the police service, at

the university, at parliament and in prisons. More recently, the graduates from the training-for-trainers course have been used in adult basic education projects.

The community mediators are empowered to sort out their own problems and those of others in the community by applying more appropriate conflict resolution techniques. The graduated community mediators have been active in the communities before. Often, they were asked to intervene in conflicts without the proper training and thus resorted to rather destructive means. Many graduates state the positive effect the training had in giving them the skills to handle conflicts more constructively and play the role of a mediator effectively.

Sometimes you come across a kid that is freaked out on dope. Now, normally I would have just taken a stone in a sock and beat the hell out of him. But through my mediation skills that I've learnt I can handle it better because I was now taught a creative way of handling a kid. (N.H., 2000)

I improved a lot since I received this training. Before I was not aware how to mediate. ... What was commonly happening before, like the arbitration When we handled a case, we just say this one is wrong and then we take the decision without the parties raising their views. ... So what we were doing before, we asked that boy ?who allegedly broke into a house? ... [If] we find that he doesn't come up with the truth ... then we end up beating [him] so he ends up telling the truth. ... Now I'm empowered by the training that I have received because now I have a good understanding how to solve the problem that is in our community. (M.N., 1999)

The immediate impact of the activities of community mediators is the effective resolution of conflicts occurring within the community context. The number of cases handled shows that there is a clear need for community-based conflict resolution and that the trained community mediators have become a valuable resource for the communities in which they live. On average, the mediation trainees of a five-month cycle reported more than 17 cases per month. In an impressive number of cases, specific conflict situations were alleviated and the plight of many victims has been ameliorated.

But what is so rewarding – it's not so much financially – but the fulfilment of after helping a person, a mother or anyone for that matter to solve a problem. And you see the relief in that person's face and that person comes up to you and says thank you. (N.H., 2000)

One of the long-term effects of the programme is the peaceful and constructive outcome provided by conflict resolution. Community mediators serve as role models for others, not only the parties involved. The large number of cases that are handled successfully by QPC staff members adds to this effect. Residents start to feel a sense of security amidst a pervasive culture of violence in their communities. They become more comfortable about approaching QPC or the community mediators for assistance. An indication of this effect is the ever-growing number of requests for mediation sessions as well as workshops.

Relationship building is one of the most prominent effects of the work done by the Reconciliation and Reconstruction Programme. Relationships are reinforced and developed

on various levels. The most immediate impact of the training is on the trainees themselves. Coming from diverse backgrounds and different cultural groupings, they get to know each other and learn to work together with people from areas where they had no previous contact.

But the most important thing was the human factor, although it wasn't on the agenda every week. But it was there. Just a circle, and to draw strength from your colleagues and your friends. It feels like a good family, a happy family that you come to every Tuesday. (N.H., 2000)

[The mediation training] has created the relationship between a mediator and another mediator, between the mediator and his/her neighbours and between the mediator and the community at large. Explaining what is entailed in these words is that before I started the training I knew not about M. from Vrygrond, H. from Manenberg, A. from Kraaifontein, P. from Old Crossroads, A. from Philippi, T. from Khayelitsha and E. from Mfuleni. But through Quaker Peace Centre I can openly call them friends and colleagues. Before we started the training, some if not all of us knew nothing about how to handle a conflict and also how to mediate a conflict. Thus I say that the Centre created that sounding relationship between a mediator and the neighbours and also between the mediators and the community as a whole. (Dywili, 1999)

Besides the trainees themselves, relationships have improved at other levels, including between the QPC and the communities and between the community mediators and their communities:

I gained more respect from the community. People are aware about us. They know where to contact us. ... People can come straight to us. And they know that they can depend on us as mediators. That's the one change that took place in Manenberg. Before, people were very nervous, or should I say scared to talk about their problems and to let one know about what is happening in their lives also. But they feel more free now to open up. That's the changes that took place in our area. And we work very happily with the people in Manenberg. ... There are more and more people coming. (S.C., 1999)

On another level, the relationship between the community and the local police in some areas has been transformed into a constructive partnership. The police now refer petty cases to the community mediators, and in turn the community mediators feel more comfortable with informing the police about violent crimes that are reported to them by the victims.

We've been actually placing mediators there for their practical work. And that has created ... an improved relationship between the police stations and the community. I think there we scored very highly. (Mbambo, 2000a)

The close relationship with community structures is one of the keys to success. Through direct intervention and workshops on conflict handling and leadership skills, decision-makers in the communities are equipped with the skills to lead in a way that is most beneficial to the individuals of that community. This approach ensures, over the long run,

that future leaders and political figures at the local, regional and national level are equipped with conflict-handling skills. Furthermore, the implementation of community projects can be handled with less conflict and more participation from the communities affected by the development.

Challenges and Potential

South Africa has undergone profound change, and the pace of change poses new challenges for all role players and NGOs like the QPC. Funding has to be secured, the relationship with government has to be re-designed, and the approach has to be adapted to the changing patterns of conflict in the communities.

Education was one of the highly contested issues during the days of apartheid, leaving its mark on the disadvantaged people of South Africa. Illiteracy levels are high and pose a serious problem for any form of training like the community mediation course. For instance, training material had to be redesigned accordingly. Furthermore, many community mediators have difficulties in taking notes and writing monthly reports on their activities.

The trainees are mainly unemployed. This fact has many consequences, some good and some bad. On the one hand, the participants have time available and can commit themselves to extensive work. On the other hand, the need for some form of income has to be addressed, either through paying a stipend – as done till the end of 1999 – through providing the prospect of better job opportunities after the training, or even the creation of employment as community mediators. Unfortunately, the expectation that jobs will be created via the program itself cannot be fulfilled under current conditions.

The stipend that was paid has been reduced to the level of transport costs. Paying the trainees a wage-like stipend was problematic. Some participants were motivated by earning an income, rather than by a sincere interest and commitment to community mediation. The reduced reimbursement now ensures that the trainees are motivated mainly by gaining skills and working for their communities.⁷ The challenge of high unemployment rates and the need for job creation, however, will have to be addressed by the QPC and demands conceptual redress in order to achieve sustainability.

The multitude of conflicts and people in need cannot be tackled by one NGO alone. The small number of staff (Mediation Training employs only two fieldworkers plus a manager who also acts as a fieldworker in some areas) severely constrains the potential impact of the programme:

There are a lot of areas which we haven't yet touched. ... It's because we didn't have staff. (Nxusani, 2000)

We serve a large population with gross socio-economic problems. There is thus a need for many more mediators to be trained. (QPC, 2000, p. 19)

QPC decided that the impact would be maximised by targeting a limited number of communities directly, in order to not only ease the tensions, but also to build sustainable

peace by training a dependable group of local community mediators. These local capacities for peace in an empowered community assume the conflict-handling task in the long run, and the QPC is free to target another community in crisis.

Furthermore, recent shifts in the approach of the QPC promote the idea of institutionalising community mediation and advocating partnerships with other role-players. The QPC's Director, Jeremy Routledge, expressed this sharpened focus as follows:

There has been a greater clarity of focus in all our programmes. We are developing models [that] can be institutionalised and replicated. We are moving towards training trainers to a greater extent. We are also entering into strategic partnerships, as we seek to co-operate with others in civil society and lobby government to increase our impact. (QPC, 2000, p. 4)

Institutionalisation is being pursued through the establishment of a Community Mediators' Association, which is becoming an ever more independent organisation that tries to establish professional standards, ensure ongoing training and supervision, and to create employment.

The process of exiting from a community is a sensitive issue: When can a community be considered peaceful and the structures and numbers of community mediators effective and sustainable? In some cases, the community was left too early and gains made by the intervention were lost.

We have tried to establish a working relationship with the police. So far it's been going well, like in Guguletu. ... [But] we are just cutting that link. Just like in Guguletu, where we didn't recruit last year and the relationship was already formed with the police. So it means now when we recruit in Guguletu, we must start afresh again. (Nxusani, 2000)

It could be concluded, however, that cooperation at a local level depends too much on individual commitment and has to be accompanied by support from the top level (i.e., government). This support can back the efforts at a local level not only by legitimising their mandate to co-operate, but also by providing human and material resources.

The QPC has targeted the top-level government on several occasions. Closer cooperations in family courts and at police stations have been discussed in meetings with the Justice Department. Though warm words were exchanged and the government has expressed sincere interest in closer cooperation, little action has followed as yet.

I see a lot of potential and success in the mediators. Because now there are community courts [that] are opened in the locations there, and they are called to be assessors in the community courts. ... The Department of Justice now realises that the mediators can be so helpful in the local courts there because big courts are sitting with petty cases; the cases [that] can be handled at a local level by the mediators. (Nxusani, 2000)

A couple of trained community mediators have been recruited as lay assessors in the newly

established family courts. This cooperation has the backing of the national government, but its existence and success mainly relies on individual efforts. To be effective and successful over the long term, this cooperation with family courts and police stations need to be marketed as pilot projects in order to serve as a model for other forms of cooperation with other organisations and communities. Thus, in a critical partnership with government the QPC can play an important role as an NGO that points out issues which government policies fail to tackle while offering an innovative approach for cooperation.

Finally, I would like to draw attention to the limits of mediation. As stated above, the success of mediation relies on the application of some basic principles and values to which all participants must agree and adhere. Besides the pre-conditions, some other factors, like the structural causes of the conflict and power relations between the parties, come into play and determine the outcome of mediation.

Community mediation often concentrates on re-building the relationship between the adversaries. The root causes of the conflict are often difficult to address and sometimes even overlooked. However, by analysing the conflicts in his community, a police officer who was trained by the QPC as mediator concludes impressively:

Poverty is the only problem that we've got in our area because most of the crimes are related to poverty. For example, the crimes like shoplifting and the crimes like fighting in a house because the mother and the father is not working, or the couple is not working. If there is not food, you see, on the table they tend to quarrel a lot. There is a saying – I don't know whether it is in English or Xhosa – saying that if somebody is hungry, he or she cannot think well. ...

As a policeman who has been trained to mediate, normally I make lectures to my colleagues For example, a child has been found stealing a ruler or pencil in a shop, then they need to negotiate [with] the owner of the shop, asking why the child is stealing that. The problem [is] it can happen that the mother at home or the father doesn't have money to buy the ruler or the pencil. So those are the things that can be negotiated and mediated so that a child will not end in jail for stealing a ruler or chocolate. Maybe he is hungry and all that.

...

Most of the problems in the community are so petty and trivial. In so much that they can be resolved internally by the members of the community, not wasting time of the police. (S.M., 2000)

In the above-mentioned case, mediation prevented the child from being processed by the wheels of formal justice. This would have led to prosecution and could have been the beginning of an extensive criminal career for that child. Nevertheless, a sustainable solution is neither criminal prosecution nor a discussion between the shop-owner and the child. Poverty – as the root cause – has to be tackled in order to fulfil the legitimate need of the child for food or educational goods.

As impressive as such community-sensitive policing is, in order to solve the problem, the structural causes need to be addressed. Therefore, the mediated solution has to take the needs of all parties seriously, by not only healing the damage at relationship level, but also by addressing the root cause: poverty. This must ultimately be done through structural

change.

Conclusion

This case study has highlighted the link between reconciliation work and conflict resolution in the form of community mediation. Looking at the example of the Reconciliation and Reconstruction Programme of the QPC, some key concepts have been explored and impacts sketched out. The complex nature of the diverse conflict situations and communities, as well as the sophisticated approach with which these are tackled, could not be captured to their full extent in this report. Instead, the main features and some of the most impressive effects have been outlined.

While the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was mainly a vehicle for national reconciliation, the QPC is focussing on the communal and individual level. The parties in conflict come together voluntarily, assisted by an impartial mediator who is either a member of the same community (trained community mediator) or asked to intervene coming from a position of a middle-range observer (staff member of a non-governmental organisation). Not only the level of engagement and societal position distinguishes QPC from the TRC; the approach of QPC goes beyond the understanding of reconciliation as acknowledging the truth through adding the relational and structural aspects. The parties in conflict tell and listen to each other's stories, acknowledge one's own responsibility and guilt, and try to rebuild their relationship as a constructive one and to redress the structural injustices associated with the conflict. As a community-based approach, it can fill the gap that remains now that the national reconciliation process driven by the TRC comes to an end. Through the efforts of organisations like QPC, the social fabric can be rebuilt on the individual and communal level, in order to further the immense task of sustainable peace building in South Africa.

One future direction will have to be the implementation of such exemplary projects in more communities than one NGO can carry out. Thus, this community-based approach could gain national relevance.

More lessons can be learned from this extraordinary approach that has been developed over a number of years and is put into action through the inspiration and dedication of the staff members and numerous community mediators.

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- N.H. (2000, January 17). Graduated Mediator.
- Mbambo, G. (2000a, January 19). Manager, Mediation Training Programme. Quaker Peace Centre. Interview.
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- S.M. (1999, November 25). Graduated Mediator.

Nxusani, C. (2000, January 24). Fieldworker, Mediation Training Programme. Quaker Peace Centre. Interview.

M.N. (1999, November 18). Graduated Mediator.

S.O. (2000, January 31). Graduated Mediator.

U.O. (1999, November 18). Graduated Mediator.

Notes:

¹ The programme has been subdivided into two components: Conflict Handling and Mediation Training. Both apply a comprehensive approach, work closely together and are sometimes referred to by the overall programme name.

² In addition, I conducted research for my Ph.D. focusing on the role of non-governmental organisations in the transformation process in South Africa. After choosing the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation as another case study and base for my research, I was asked to write up this case study on the QPC. This report, therefore, draws heavily on the aforementioned research, but was supplemented with some more interviews and further analysis in order to point out the link between mediation/conflict resolution and reconciliation work.

³ This table is informed by the notion of Human Needs as stated by conflict resolution theorists like John W. Burton (1990). The vast number of identifiable fundamental human needs can be clustered in the above four groupings.

⁴ The Religious Society of Friends was founded in 1652 by George Fox in England. In the early years of prosecution by the established church, the name "Quaker" was a term of abuse. Although small in number, the Quakers spread out around the world. The earliest reference of them in South Africa dates back to 1728. To learn more about the history and spiritual life of the Religious Society of Friends, see Harvey Gillman, *A light that is shining: An introduction to the Quakers*, London: Quaker Home Service 1988; and John Punshon, *Portrait in grey: A short history of the Quakers*, London: Quaker Home Service 1984.

⁵ At first this office was shared with Lamla, an organisation that carried out reconciliation and development work in Khayelitsha. Their programmes and staff were incorporated into QPC in March 1991.

⁶ There are many historic examples of how Quakers put their beliefs into action. Some cases of conciliation efforts in international conflicts have been examined more closely (Yarrow, 1978). In 1947, the Quakers were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for the spirit of reconciliation that inspired their relief work carried out during World War II.

⁷ The reduction of the stipend initially caused a seeming reluctance by some community members to enrol for the training course. The value of the training itself had to be

highlighted and promoted, and with only a short delay the next course was well attended. It is too early to determine whether these participants – as compared to participants of earlier courses who had been paid a wage-like stipend – are in fact more motivated and will show a long-term commitment to work as community mediators.