



Theme: Social Cohesion

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Action Dialogue: Worcester Hope and Reconciliation Process (February 2014)

The Restitution Foundation, a Cape Town-based non-governmental organisation, was established in 2003 in response to the South African society's lack of response to the restitution recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. At its inception, the organisation adopted as vision "*to be a catalyst for restitution that would lead to healing in South Africa*". The organisation's strategy is the development and facilitation of a community-led restitution programme in the Boland town of Worcester which addresses both the psychological and socio-economic trauma caused by decades of colonial and apartheid rule. This model would then be showcased as an example to motivate other South African communities to develop their own community-led restitution interventions.

The Restitution Foundation's work in Worcester led to, in January 2010, the establishment of the Worcester Hope and Reconciliation Process (WHRP), an initiative recently identified by members of both the national and provincial cabinets as a flagship reconciliation project in South Africa.

During its first phase (2010 – 2012) the WHRP used the narrative of the 1996 racially motivated Worcester bombing as a metaphor

About this brief

This brief was commissioned by the Mandela Initiative to help inform a synthesis report on its work since the 2012 national conference, *Strategies to Overcome Poverty and Inequality*, organised by the University of Cape Town. The MI provides a multi-sectoral platform to investigate and develop strategies to overcome poverty and reduce inequality in South Africa. While the Nelson Mandela Foundation is a key partner, the Initiative has relied on collaborations between academics and researchers, government, business leaders, civil society, the church and unions.

The synthesis report serves as a framework for reporting on the work of the MI at a national gathering on 12 – 14 February 2018 at the University of Cape Town. The MI *Think Tank* has identified the objectives for the gathering as:

- to anchor the contributions of the MI within an analysis of the current South African political and economic context;
- to share the recommendations emanating from the MI-related work streams at a policy/strategic level to advance the goal of eliminating poverty and reducing inequality;
- to critically engage with the potential impact of the recommendations on eliminating structural poverty and inequality; and
- to discuss ways of promoting popular conversations and debate about what needs to be done to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality, beyond the MI.

The synthesis report aims to assist participants to prepare for the national gathering. The report drew on findings from the sectoral research projects of Think Tank members; the MI's *Action Dialogues*; a report on an MI *Community of Practice workshop* with research chairs from different universities to identify cross-cutting themes emerging from the MI's *research programme*; and the work programmes of others who have expressed an interest in contributing to the goals of the MI.

¹ Restitution Foundation

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to engage the Worcester community in dealing with the history of colonialism and apartheid in Worcester. This work led to the arrangement of the Worcester Peace Train to Pretoria where the 63 survivors of the bombing had the opportunity to meet one of the perpetrators of the bombing, Stefaans Coetzee, in the Pretoria Central Prison. Coetzee was thereafter transferred to a Correctional Facility in Worcester where he had the opportunity to meet with a 1 000 Worcester residents and answer questions on why he had committed the crime, and what led to his own transformation process. This work, developed around the Worcester bombing, was captured in a film titled *Black Christmas* that was launched in 2016.

Apart from focusing on the narrative of the 1996 Worcester bombing, the Worcester Hope and Reconciliation Process arranged a range of reconciliation activities to build social cohesion within the community. These activities include annual 16 December Reconciliation Day events with eminent South Africans addressing the Worcester community on the theme of reconciliation; annual peace table events where prominent Worcester residents discuss the challenges and opportunities of Worcester over a meal; the annual Worcester Peace Award; *koinonia* meals where small groups of Worcester residents have a meal at the home of someone from a different racial group; healing of memories workshops where Worcester residents have an opportunity to tell their own life story and listen to the stories of fellow residents; pilgrimages to Robben Island.

Since 2013, the Restitution Foundation in partnership with the Mandela Initiative, the University of Cape Town and the National Planning Commission has been supporting the WHRP to use four key focus areas (Employment, Education, Housing and Substance Abuse) of the National Developing Plan as a foundation for the development and implementation of a socio-economic restitution strategy for the community of Worcester. This collaboration included the WHRP:

- a) doing research of which organisations were already involved in socio-economic transformation work in Worcester;
- b) conducting workshops with four Worcester sectors: business, youth, civil society and faith communities to establish in which areas more work was required. From these workshops four areas were identified: housing, substance abuse, employment and education;
- c) arranging a five-day workshop for 20 Worcester activists where best-practice organisations who presented at the 2012 "Towards Carnegie 3" Conference (which started the Mandela Initiative process) and who focused on the four areas identified for Worcester were invited to present their work. At the last day of the workshop the Worcester participants used the knowledge gained through the dialogue to start developing the Worcester Hope and Reconciliation Process's own restitution plan for each of the focus areas. The workshop was followed by more planning sessions which led to the development and the adoption of the WHRP restitution plan for housing, education, employment and substance abuse.

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Since 2014, the WHRP has been executing the plans, and progress include:

Education:

- Capacitated (2 x 2-day workshops) 150 Worcester-based early childhood development (ECD) educators in understanding the development of a child's brain; the need for love, safety, stimulation and nutrition to be in place during the first 1 000 days of a child's life; understanding the Children's Act.
- As a strategy to support numeracy, colour identification and small muscle stimulation the WHRP collected 20 000 colourful plastic bottle caps and manufactured 20 000 colourful wooden blocks which were distributed equally to the 150 ECD centers in Worcester. In addition, the WHRP raised a R100 000 to buy educational tools for under-resourced ECD centre in Worcester.
- Completion of the 16 weeks (every Tuesday from 09:00 – 12:00) training in English of 19 ECD educators in computer literacy.
- Completion of the 16 weeks (every Tuesday from 09:00 – 12:00) training in Afrikaans of 50 ECD educators in computer literacy.
- Completion of the training of ECD cooks to provide healthy, nutritious and affordable food (with no sugar and at least one vegetable and one fruit) for ECD learners.
- Training of 120 ECD learners in basic dental health care and supplying each learner with a new toothbrush, a water cup and toothpaste.
- Establishment of the infrastructure (10 containers, desks and chair, magazines, etc.) of four Ithemba (hope) centres (Zwelethemba, Roodewal, Riverview, Avian Park) where eight youth workers will assist learners with their homework and provide support to learners who are suffering from challenges related to their low socio-economic environment (e.g. addressing the reasons why children are missing school, poverty, single parent households, etc.). Currently funds are being raised for the appointment of the eight youth workers.
- Raised funds for the training of six auxiliary social workers by the Department of Social Development. All six trainees passed their exams and are ready to be employed to work within the community.
- Provided 258 track suits for learners in three ECD centres in low-socio-economic environments.

Employment:

- The WHRP supported the Ikhamvaletu bead work with contracts which enabled the employment of 30 people.
- In January 2015 Coetzee, one of the perpetrators of the 1996 Worcester bombing, was released on strict parole conditions and started working for the non-profit organisation Feed the Child where he further developed his skills in organic farming. As his commitment to do restitution to the survivors of the bombing, Coetzee and his Feed the Child colleague, Gift Mlambo, facilitated in December 2016 an agriculture workshop in Worcester where 30 survivors of the bombing were trained on using organic methods for vegetable gardens in the back of their homes. The workshop, organised by the Restitution Foundation in partnership with the Khulumani Support

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Group, provided participants with the theoretical basis as well as practical exposure to the organic farming methodology. At the end of the workshop participants received vegetable seedlings to plant in their own gardens. Three families of the survivors of the 1996 Worcester bombing are still benefiting from food provided from their vegetable gardens.

Substance abuse:

- The WHRP developed three murals at primary schools to educate learners on their cultural heritage to support the development of their cultural identity.
- 30 high school learners (from two schools) who live exemplary lives were trained to mentor 600 primary school learners to not experiment with drugs.
- The WHRP arranged a public meeting in a community affected by gang violence to discuss strategies on how the community could take back control from the gangs and prevent the selling of drugs in their communities.

Housing:

The WHRP designed a new housing strategy for Worcester:

- New housing developments should be linked with new economic developments;
- People should live closely to where they are working;
- New economic developments should be situated within the townships where most of the labour force are living;
- Open spaces in Worcester should be used to create integrated housing whereby people from different racial groups could be living together;
- Government-subsidised housing should not only be four walls and a roof, it should be a human settlement where people can live with dignity and a sense of self-worth. This housing strategy has been adopted by the housing committee of the Worcester municipality.

For more information on the Mandela Initiative:

