

Editor: Dominique Dix-Peek: Researcher

Co-ordinators: Megan Bantjes: Trauma Professional and SANToC Co-ordinator.

Tumi Kekana: Trauma Professional

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To submit correspondence or to submit an article:

Email Dominique Dix-Peek: ddixpeek@csvr.org.za

Preface to the Traumatic Stress Update

In this edition of the Traumatic Stress update, we wish to express some of the varied events and day-to-day goings-on of the Trauma and Transition Programme (TTP). The newsletter starts with an entertaining but poignant commentary on what it is like to be an intern psychologist at CSVR. This is followed by a book review of *The Bethal Trial Story: Where do we begin*, which relates an account of the book from the perspective of a community facilitator.

A breakdown of the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) of the CSVR and the Trauma Centre for

Survivors of Violence and Torture is provided. The M&E section also includes an update of the work that our community facilitators are doing. The newsletter also features an article detailing some highlights from the *Beyond Reconciliation* conference, as well as an update on the activities of the South African No Torture Consortium (SANToC).

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this edition of the Trauma Stress Update.

We hope that you enjoy the newsletter.

Dominique Dix-Peek: Editor

Being an Intern Psychologist at CSVR in 2009

Well... let me tell you about it.

Arrival: Was just like a plane when it is about to take off. The early days were dead quiet. I guess it was due to the fact that most of the people were still on leave.

Expectation: I expected that there would be a long list of trauma clients who were eagerly waiting to come and narrate what happened to them.

Realized: Oops! I only realized then that traumatised people struggle to come and say 'things' to us. It actually takes a lot of courage for them to come and knock at our doors.

Enrichment: What a light bulb moment! There is nothing that could have prepared me better for seeing these people. However, training and more training, and more training made its mark and enabled me to walk with them.

Conclusion: I appreciate the privilege that was

afforded me to be part of the trauma team. It has been a humbling moment just to sit with these clients... listening and noticing their pain. What I have gained is such a treasure which I would not trade for anything.

Malosi (my supervisor) it was hard! But you enabled me to navigate through it all. A big thanks to you.

Merci- Oops! That is French... A really big thank you to TTP!



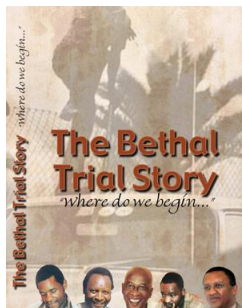
Photo: Hlengiwe Mkwanyana, Jabu Masitha and Mosima Selemela

By Jabulile Masitha: Intern Psychologist

Book Review: The Bethal Trial Story: Where do we begin

Book by: Templeton 'Pops' Mageza, Rodney Tsholetsane, Michael Sello Matsobane and Themba Hlatshwayo.

Published by 'Class of 76', Johannesburg, 2009.



This book chronicles the story of four of the 18 anti-apartheid activists who appeared at the secretly held trial in Bethal. This trial was related to *inter alia*, the 16 June 1976 student uprisings that took place in Soweto and then in Kagiso the following day. Kagiso, located in Mogale City in the West Rand, is where Trauma and Transition Programme (TTP) does some of its community work with ex-combatants.

A significant part of the vulgarity and tragedy of

apartheid was its violence. It tortured – physically and psychologically – those who dared challenge it. It was therefore inevitable that the four authors, like most freedom fighters all over the country, would be tortured by their apartheid captors. Two of them had damaged hearing as a result of the torture. They also lost four of their comrades through death in detention, which the apartheid state claimed to be suicide.

The many years spent on Robben Island and other prisons were used fruitfully for the authors. On their release, the four had acquired various academic degrees.

While the four are professionals and enjoy the fruits of gainful employment, only one of them has been able to get psychosocial support. This intervention is profoundly crucial to the healing of victims of torture. In the book, elements of anger and disappointment are expressed by these activists. One even emphasizes the fact that he and his wife divorced as a result of the impact of his detention. However, in spite of their fate, their resilience helped them to emerge victorious.

By Modiegi Merafe: Community Facilitator

M&E Corner

Two of the SANToC member organizations reported on their services for the period July - December 2009. At CSVR and the Trauma Centre for Survivors of Violence and Torture combined, a total of 133 torture survivors (75 male and 58 female) attended individual or family counselling, or a 2nd generation camp.

Gender breakdown of Individual Torture Clients from July to December 2009

1. CSVR¹

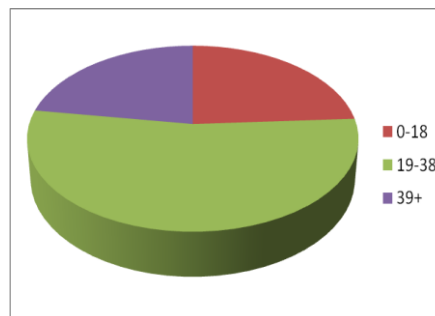
Total number of clients: 63

- Female: 38
- Male: 25

2. The Trauma Centre for Survivors of Violence and Torture:

Total number of clients: 70

- Female: 20
- Male: 50



Graph: Breakdown of age of clients seen by two SANToC members from January - June 2009

Community and Group Work

During 2009, TTP's community and group work grew faster than anticipated. There were a total of 443 people reached by TTP facilitators for the whole of this period.

By Dominique Dix-peek: Researcher

¹ Only Individual counselling sessions included

Beyond Reconciliation Conference: 2-6 December 2009

In December 2009, Nomfundo, Gaudence, Megan and Dominique went to the Beyond Reconciliation conference in Cape Town. Below are some observations and highlights of the conference.

Countries:

The conference provided a multinational perspective on reconciliation issues with delegates who are working in countries such as Germany, Rwanda, Uganda, East Timor, Togo, DRC, Canada, Australia, Northern Ireland, Israel, Palestine and of course South Africa. The presentations of diverse stories of conflict, as well as varied victims and perpetrators reminded us that South Africa's suffering is not more or less than others' and that our struggle for peace is not unique. It was encouraging and energizing to remember that we conduct our reconciliation efforts alongside likeminded people across the globe.

Intergenerational Trauma:

Intergenerational trauma was a theme running throughout the conference. Applying knowledge in this area could improve how we make sense of, and address, post-transition problems in South Africa. The Study Group on Intergenerational Consequences of the Holocaust states, "The conscious and unconscious psychosocial consequences of experience that is not digested emotionally – be it traumatic or culpable – are transmitted from one generation to another." They talk about the revitalization of the "destructive dynamic of trauma" which, if unrecognized, can happen at any time in the next generation. The impact of trauma on people's parenting skills and the family context is fairly straightforward to understand but analyzing the unconscious dynamics of intergenerational effects cannot be grasped as intuitively or immediately. The salience of this theme at the conference suggested that the knowledge coming out of existing intergenerational studies and interventions in South Africa needs to be expanded as an important cornerstone of peace. This could involve increasing the pool of thinkers in this field and disseminating and applying the knowledge they produce.

Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu:

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) gave South Africa and the world a chance to dialogue with, and critique, reconciliation. As head of this commission, Desmond Tutu is considered an expert in many areas of the reconciliation process. He is a man who believes deeply in the ideals of love and forgiveness, and is committed to promoting human rights. It is because of this that the Fetzer Institute awarded Desmond Tutu a joint award with the Dalai Lama of the Fetzer Prize for Love and Forgiveness.

He emphasised these ideals during a roundtable discussion with discussants such as Jessica Benjamin, Graham Dawson, Bjorn Krondorfer, Deborah Posel and Ervin Staub. He stated that, "we are on the winning side for forgiveness, love, compassion and caring". However this is an active process: It entails every person working toward seeing every other person as inherently human. He argued that "when you dehumanise someone, you are dehumanised in the process". For this reason love, forgiveness, compassion and caring are essential elements of humanity since they lay the groundwork for human life.



Photo: Desmond Tutu²

Judith Lewis Herman:

Judith Lewis Herman is an icon within the trauma field. Through her work, she has made distinctive contributions toward the notion of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), specifically regarding Complex PTSD. It was with this in mind that most delegates who went to the Beyond Reconciliation conference were intensely excited about discussing

[Continued on page 4]

² Taken from blog.mlive.com

her research entitled “Justice from the Victim’s Perspective” with her, and asking questions around trauma and how, in her view, it fits in with reconciliation.

One very interesting aspect of reconciliation that Judith Herman dealt with during her presentation was that of forgiveness. She contends that, ideally, the process of forgiveness places the burden of shame from the victim’s shoulders onto the shoulders of the perpetrator. However, public forgiveness has the potential to depreciate the victim by forcing him/her into a position where s/he is forced to forgive because of external pressure.

She contends that forgiveness is not necessary for healing: the victim can find some kind of healing by letting go of the past, rather than forgiving wrongs that occurred. More important is the acknowledgement of wrongs that occurred and vindication by the community.



Photo: Judith Lewis Herman³

By Megan Bantjes and Dominique Dix-Peek

The South African No Torture Consortium Activities



International Human Rights Day: 10 December 2010

SANToC member organisations commemorated Human Rights Day in three provinces: the Western Cape, Gauteng and the Eastern Cape. In Cape Town, brochures and posters about torture and SANToC were distributed to police stations, legal centres and other strategic places. In Johannesburg, a meeting was held with experts from various African countries who detailed the Human Rights situation in their home countries in order to produce a press release. Brochures and

posters were also distributed to organizations that torture survivors may visit in Johannesburg.

The first phase of an Art is Advocacy project was held in Cradock in the Eastern Cape. Survivors met to share their experiences. The follow-up workshop, run by the Curriculum Development Project Trust, was held in Johannesburg in January. This built on the narrative work done in Cradock to develop concepts for advocacy messages. Advocacy media were then designed and printed.

By Megan Bantjes: SANToC Co-ordinator

Recent Reports

1. Dix-Peek, D. Bandeira, M. and Higson-Smith, C. (2009) *Profiling Torture 2: Addressing Torture and its consequences in South Africa*. Monitoring and Evaluation Progress Report. CSVR.
<http://www.csvr.org.za/images/docs/csvrrct.pdf>
2. Bandeira, M (2009). *Preliminary strategic guidelines for addressing violence in Angola: Results of a Needs Assessment Workshop Held in Luanda*. The Development Workshop, CSVR, International Center for Transitional Justice, and University of Oslo.
<http://www.csvr.org.za/images/docs/preliminary.pdf>

³ Taken from: <http://www.uctv.tv/images//programs/6233.jpg>