

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE CENTRE

IMPORTANT POINTS OF REFERENCE WHEN ENTERING DIALOGUE ON MATTERS OF HISTORICAL, NATIONAL, and CULTURAL IMPORTANCE

Preamble to the Constitution of South Africa

*We, the people of South Africa,
Recognise the injustices of our past;
Honour those who suffered for justice and freedom in our land;
Respect those who have worked to build and develop our country; and
Believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity.*

We therefore, through our freely elected representatives, adopt this Constitution as the supreme law of the Republic so as to-

- *Heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights;*
- *Lay the foundations for a democratic and open society in which government is based on the will of the people and every citizen is equally protected by law;*
- *Improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person; and*
- *Build a united and democratic South Africa able to take its rightful place as a sovereign state in the family of nations.*

*May God protect our people.
Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika. Morena boloka setjhaba sa heso.
God seën Suid-Afrika. God bless South Africa.
Mudzimu fhatutshedza Afurika. Hosi katekisa Afrika.*

The perspective of Peacebuilding¹

Peacebuilding seeks to prevent, reduce, transform, and help people recover from violence in all forms, even structural violence that has not yet led to massive civil unrest. At the same time it empowers people to foster relationships at all levels that sustain them and their environment.

Peacebuilding supports the development of relationships at all levels of society: between individuals and within families; communities; organizations; businesses; governments; and cultural, religious, economic and political institutions and movements. Relationships are a form of power or *social capital*. When people connect and form relationships, they are more likely to cooperate together to constructively address conflict.

Peace does not just happen. It is built when people take great care in their decision-making to plan for the long term, anticipating potential problems, engaging in ongoing analysis of the conflict and local

¹ The following section is taken from The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding by Lisa Schirch, 2004, Good Books, Intercourse, PA, p8-24

context, and coordinating different actors and activities in all stages of conflict and at all levels of society. Strategic peacebuilding recognizes the complexity of the tasks required to build peace. Peacebuilding is strategic when resources, actors and approaches are coordinated to accomplish multiple goals and address multiple issues for the long term.

The perspective of Conflict Transformation

Simply managing and resolving conflict can suggest that we ignore underlying issues and the need for change. Conflict transformation has been suggested as recognising the immediate situation as well as the underlying patterns and context. It has been defined as “to **envision and respond to the ebb and flow of social conflict as life-giving opportunities for creating constructive change processes that reduce violence, increase justice in direct interaction and social structures and respond to real-life problems in human relationships.**”²

² The Little Book of Conflict Transformation by John Paul Lederach, 2003, Good Books, Intercourse, PA, p14