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Reconciliation and Development

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1. Preface

In many conflict and post-conflict countries, situations in which peace and justice appear to compete with one another are on the rise. Conflict leaders may accept peace agreements only in return for amnesty. Fragile security, precarious post-conflict power-sharing arrangements and weak institutions may limit the scope for achieving justice. Conflict victims may feel resentful if no one is called to account for their suffering. Peace-building may be further complicated if peace/security, justice/rule-of-law and other development priorities have to compete for scarce resources.

To show how to constructively deal with tensions that can arise was the aim of the international conference in Nuremberg, on 25-27 June 2007, entitled "Building a Future on Peace and Justice". Organized by the governments of Finland, Germany and Jordan, as well as the International Center for Transitional Justice and the Crisis Management Initiative, the conference drew distinguished guests including high level UN mediators and government officials as well as over 300 grassroots participants and practitioners from over 80 countries, including many current or former conflict regions.

The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung jointly prepared a workshop on Reconciliation at the conference. This Occasional Paper by Karen Brounéus contributed to the preparation of the discussions. The purpose of the workshop was to discuss the importance of reconciliation, understood as a pragmatic process of building group relationships: how does this process relate to other justice and development requirements? What is the role of civil society in building such relationships?

The workshop concluded that reconciliation is multi-dimensional, multi-layered, profound and complex, and should be based on minimum conditions and tolerance to build working relationships at a political level, and to build trust in a political process. Reparations and the restoration of civic trust in state institutions are seen as key elements of reconciliation. Reconciliation processes need to respond to local experiences, needs, values, aspirations and resources. Local culture and traditional practices can provide important resources for reconciliation that are more locally accessible and legitimate. Sustainable reconciliation also requires the involvement of civil society. Civil society can play a crucial role in strengthening reconciliation processes through advocacy, public education and community empowerment. Many challenges remain, e.g. the politicization and manipulation of the term 'reconciliation' by political actors for their own narrow political interest. The manner in which disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes create further inequalities between victims and ex-combatants have the potential to create new conflicts in post-conflict societies; and to address past hatreds and bitterness based on multi-ethnic tribal identities.

In order to make peacebuilding processes successful, transitional justice challenges need to be addressed. The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung intends to contribute to the process of building an international consensus on how to constructively deal with transitional justice situations. We are grateful to the author of this paper and the many contributors of the conference.

Marc Saxer
Dialogue on Globalization, FES Berlin

2. Executive Summary

Reconciliation has become an important part of postconflict peacebuilding rhetoric and practice in recent years. As nearly all conflicts today are intrastate, former enemies, perpetrators and victims, must continue living side by side after the war. Yet, attitudes and behaviors do not change at the moment of a declaration of peace. Since coexistence is necessary, the need for reconciliation is profound.

The aim of this background study is to give a shared point of departure for discussion on the critical issues of reconciliation and development after war. Reconciliation is defined and seen from a pragmatic and societal perspective; it does not mean avoiding accountability for the sake of truth, neither does it entail collective amnesia to avoid the risks of truth telling, nor interpersonal forgiveness. Reconciliation means finding a way to balance issues such as truth and justice so that the slow changing of behaviors, attitudes and emotions between former enemies can take place. It is the pragmatic work of building relationships and confidence that will hold for the pressures on peace.

If security is not provided, the process of reconciliation may risk to backlash in increased violence.

In order to structure the analysis, reconciliation is suggested to be examined from three societal levels: top-level, middle-range, and grassroots. An overview is provided of some key concerns regarding reconciliation in relation to justice, security, and politics respectively, and their policy implications discussed. Regarding justice, recent research on truth commissions provides a basis for new development challenges. In close connection emerges the issue of security. Security risks have not been included in the theoretical literature on truth telling and reconciliation. However, recent research indicates that if security is not provided, the process of reconciliation may risk to backlash in increased violence or in suppression of truth. Political initiatives for reconciliation through for example legislation are crucial. However, the postconflict state is often quite weak thus tensions may easily arise between reconciliation needs, development ambitions, and politics. Finally, truth telling being one of the major components in reconciliation processes around the world today, the concerns of truth telling with regard to trauma, reparation, and culture are briefly highlighted.

The postconflict state is often quite weak thus tensions may easily arise between reconciliation needs, development ambitions, and politics.

The study concludes that there is no magic formula for reconciliation; each reconciliation process needs to be designed according to the specific context. We urgently need empirical research to learn of general trends regarding the promises and pitfalls for processes of reconciliation.

3. Reconciliation and Development

Reconciliation and Development in Postconflict Peacebuilding

In recent years there has been increasing discourse concerning reconciliation as a postconflict measure for the prevention of further conflict. After the groundbreaking work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, reconciliation – through truth commissions, official apologies, memorials, etc – has become an almost routine element of postconflict peacebuilding rhetoric and practice. Peru, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Timor Leste, Liberia and Rwanda, to name but a few, have embarked upon processes of reconciliation in the new millennium. Reconciliation has become a high-level concern for national development initiatives as well as for international development assistance in postconflict societies.

One reason for the increased focus on reconciliation may be that nearly all conflicts today are intrastate.[1] After peace, former enemies, perpetrators and victims, must continue living side by side just as before the atrocities were committed. However, attitudes and behaviors do not change from genocidal to collegial at the moment of a declaration of peace. Since coexistence is necessary, the need for reconciliation is profound. How to design and support reconciliation processes is a crucial question for national and international postconflict development initiatives.

One reason for the increased focus on reconciliation may be that nearly all conflicts today are intrastate. After peace, former enemies, perpetrators and victims, must continue living side by side.

Seen from an academic point of view, reconciliation is anything but a conceptualized tool for peacebuilding, or an operationalized term for postconflict analysis. Few empirical studies have been made in the field of reconciliation. The gap between theory and practice is vast. Claims made of the relationship between for example truth, justice, peace, and reconciliation are in need of empirical backing (Weinstein and Stover 2004; Mendeloff 2004). Research is needed to define the advantages, risks and obstacles connected with reconciliation efforts in societies emerging from conflict. In order to promote development and "do no harm" (Anderson 1999), we need informed decision-making that can strengthen reconciliation and avoid undermining fragile relations.

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This background study focuses on reconciliation and development after internal conflict and provides an overview of some key concerns in the field and their policy implications. Reconciliation is seen from a pragmatic and societal perspective. The aim is to give a shared point of departure for discussion on the critical issues of reconciliation and development after war.

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1   In 2005, 31 intrastate conflicts were recorded in the Uppsala Conflict Data Program while no interstate conflicts were active (Harbom, Högbladh, and Wallensteen 2006). During the years 1989–2004, the number of intrastate conflicts ranged from 27 to 50 per year, whereas interstate conflicts varied in quantity from zero to two. The Uppsala Conflict Data Program continually and systematically collects worldwide data on armed conflict. Coding rules and definitions can be found at www.ucdp.uu.se

Defining Reconciliation

There are many different views of the meaning of reconciliation. Some definitions hold religious connotations, some are more political, some psychological. In a previous overview of the field (Brounéus 2003), the following definition of reconciliation was proposed which will also be used in this report:

Reconciliation is a societal process that involves mutual acknowledgment of past suffering and the changing of destructive attitudes and behavior into constructive relationships toward sustainable peace.

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Apart from distilling many definitions into one, the strength of this definition lies in its clear specification of the central components involved in reconciliation: changes in emotion (mutual acknowledgment of suffering), attitude, and behaviour.[2] It emphasizes that reconciliation is a *societal* process after armed conflict, that is, reconciliation involves changes within and between former enemy groups regarding themselves and the other. Finally, it is a *process,* not a remote goal to be achieved when war has ended. This definition lies in line with others who see reconciliation as a pragmatic process in which relations are rebuilt to enable coexistence and sustainable peace (Bloomfield 2006; Staub 2006; van der Merwe 1999).

On Forgiveness, Accountability and Amnesia

Forgiveness is often spoken of as a condition for reconciliation. However, it might be wise to regard forgiveness and reconciliation as two separate processes; forgiveness being a one-way process, while reconciliation emphasizes mutuality, involving both perpetrator and victim. Our definition of reconciliation does not rule out the possibility of forgiveness; it may occur in a long-term process, but forgiveness is not considered necessary for reconciliation. Moreover, "[f]orgiveness is not…a political task of the state. Forgiveness demands more than statecraft can deliver," as Villa-Vicencio observes (Villa-Vicencio 2006).

Reconciliation means finding a way to balance issues such as truth and justice so that the slow changing of behaviours, attitudes and emotions between former enemies can take place.

Reconciliation is part of the growing literature on transitional justice where the balance between retributive justice and restorative justice for postconflict societies is discussed (more below). Reconciliation does not mean avoiding accountability for the sake of truth, neither does it entail collective amnesia to avoid the risks of truth telling. It means finding a way to balance issues such as truth and justice so that the slow changing of behaviours, attitudes and emotions between former enemies can take place. It is the pragmatic work of building relationships and confidence that will hold for the pressures on peace.

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2   The report was commissioned by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and can be downloaded at: www.pcr.uu.se/publications/other_pub/SIDA2982en_ReconWEB_brouneus.pdf

Top-down, Middle-out, Bottom-up

In order to structure the analysis of reconciliation, it can be examined from three societal levels: top-level, middle-range and grassroots – each with its own actors and methods.[3]

International and national criminal tribunals, important top-level methods for reconciliation, play a central role in the reconciliation process for two reasons. First, accountability and punishment of certain crimes are considered in both theory and practice to be important for reconciliation; there is a legal and moral perception that the most severe crimes, such as instigating genocide, must be punished. Second, a functioning legal system is vital for reinstating a sense of order and safety after violence. The importance of training leaders should also be mentioned as they are top-level actors with the potential to promote reconciliation. Their attitudes and behavior concerning issues such as suffering, coexistence and the past will be reflected in the national work for peace and thus have a 'top-down' effect on the population's rehabilitation and reconciliation.

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Middle-range initiatives for reconciliation are projects that influence emotions, attitudes, and behaviour in both top-level decision makers and the grassroots community. They are close to both constituencies, reaching both 'middle-up' and 'middle-down'. Middle-range actors are, for example non-governmental organizations, civil society groups, religious groups, medical and psychosocial staff, and the media. The media has an exceptional role in influencing attitudes and behaviour. This has been used to provoke hatred – but increasingly also to promote peace.[2] Another significant middle-range method for reconciliation is the truth commission, which has become a central part of development practice for peace-building in the past decades (Hayner 2001). In the best of cases, truth commissions affect top-level politics and engage the population, hopefully promoting reconciliation on both levels. However, risks for retraumatization and security threats as a result of truth telling have been demonstrated in recent empirical research (Brounéus 2007; Byrne 2004). Identifying the strengths and risks with truth commissions is an area in crucial need of research (Barsalou 2007; Mendeloff 2004).

In the best of cases, truth commissions affect top-level politics and engage the population. However, risks for retraumatization and security threats as a result of truth telling have been demonstrated.

In all societies there are methods for handling conflict without violence; people who are turned to when there are disagreements to be sorted out or cleansing rituals for healing. Experiencing constructive relationships with former enemies – with the sufferings of the past in mind – the peace of the present might be too precious to waste on further war. By strengthening and empowering local actors for peace, the foundations are laid for national reconciliation. This is the **'bottom-up'** approach to reconciliation and includes meetings between grassroots leaders and their communities with the aim to build collaboration and eventually understanding between former enemy groups.

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3 These categories build on John Paul Lederach's classification of approaches to peacebuilding (Lederach 1997).

4 For example, *Search for Common Ground's* children's television programmes with the aim to reduce negative stereotypes and increase respect in for example Macedonia, for more information see www.sfcg.org; radio drama programmes on trauma, healing and reconciliation in Rwanda, Burundi and the DRC by professor Ervin Staub, Dr Laurie Pearlman and the organisation *La Benevolencija,* see www.heal-reconcile-rwanda.org.

Reconciliation and Justice

The question of how to deal with the atrocities of the past in a country emerging from internal conflict is critical and enormously complex. Should there be tribunals to punish perpetrators? Should amnesty be granted in order to avoid disturbing a fragile peace? Or should a truth commission be established to ensure that the past will be acknowledged and not repeated, and dignity restored in victims and survivors? What does the justice versus stability equation look like and what is best for the process of reconciliation? There is strong consensus that, as Bar-Tal puts it, "justice is indispensable for reconciliation."[1]

Within the literature on reconciliation, there has been much discourse in recent years concerning retributive versus restorative justice. *Retributive justice,* also called criminal, procedural, or legalistic justice, focuses on crime as the violation of law. Crime is a matter between the perpetrator and the state. Punishment is decided upon by the criminal justice system, transferring "the individuals' desire for revenge to the state or official body" (Minow 1998). *Restorative or reparative justice,* on the other hand, focuses on crime as a conflict between individuals as well as on the injuries crime inflicts on all parties: the victim, the perpetrator and the society (Zehr 2001). The interest of the justice system is here to reconcile and heal conflictive relationships in order to end the vicious circle of crime, revenge, and recurring crime. This is done for example by official acknowledgment of the past, formalized apologies, and reparations to victims.

Truth commissions are hoped to provide a judicial balance for postconflict societies. However, in one of the most cogent critiques of the field, Mendeloff argues that the beneficial claims made in the literature of truth-telling and truth-seeking mechanisms on reconciliation and peace have been based on flawed assumptions and on faith rather than on empirical evidence (Mendeloff 2004). He argues that there is a necessity to restrain the enthusiasm for these mechanisms in the absence of empirical knowledge and stresses the urgent need of systematic research in the area.

One of the few empirical studies that has tested the link between truth and reconciliation is Gibson's South Africa survey from 2004 (Gibson 2004). The results of the survey showed that among white South Africans, accepting the truth contributed to reconciliation. The same seemed to be true among Asian and Colored South Africans. However, among black South Africans, truth did not lead to reconciliation. Gibson points out that even though this may be a "disappointing finding ... truth does not contribute to irreconciliation either" (p. 215) – a fear many had when gruesome testimonies were made.

On the other hand, Meernik recently tested the impact of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) on societal peace in Bosnia (Meernik 2005). Meernik calls into question the effects of justice when decided and initiated by the international community (as in the case of the ICTY). Contrary to the common

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5 Speech held at the "Stockholm International Forum: Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation", April 23-24, 2002.

assumptions regarding truth-telling, peace, and reconciliation, Meernik finds that arrests or judgments of war criminals in the ICTY were more often than not correlated with increased hostility between ethnic groups. His conclusion is that the ICTY does not have a meaningful effect on societal peace in Bosnia.

These initial empirical results lead to the notion that we must include a risk calculation when discussing the balance of truth, justice and reconciliation. For a process of reconciliation after conflict, one must take into consideration the society's ability to sustain the pressure and tension of exposing difficult truths without collapsing into renewed violence (Nordquist 2002). Finding the balance between truth and justice is not an undemanding venture.

For a process of reconciliation, one must take into consideration the society's ability to sustain the pressure and tension of exposing difficult truths without collapsing into renewed violence.

Transforming judicial institutions in order to build a sustainable capacity for handling justice and accountability in the postconflict society itself is crucial. In most cases, the infrastructure has been destroyed and the staff, including the academic elite, is missing. Rebuilding the infrastructure and supporting education for capacity building is an important area for development with direct links to reconciliation; if the administration of justice is just, a large step toward reconciliation has been taken. Preparing a country to legally engage with war crimes, or to take over cases from an international tribunal as is currently being discussed with regard to the ICTR and Rwanda's national judicial capacity, is an area where development assistance can have a significant impact. By asserting the importance of considering for example ethnic dimensions and the role of a just peace for all, institutions which previously have been associated with authoritarianism and threat may be transformed to playing an important role for relation-building through justice.

In preparing a country to legally engage with war crimes, development assistance can have a significant impact. Institutions which previously have been associated with authoritarianism and threat may be transformed to playing an important role for relation-building through justice.

Reconciliation and Politics

The tensions that may arise between reconciliation needs on the one hand and development ambitions and politics on the other are evident. Postconflict societies are most often in the beginning of a democratization process and the state quite weak. Politics is steered by conditions in office and the support of the population, all the more difficult in the brittle state of postconflict. Large focus on structural and economic development in postconflict nationbuilding is needed for reasons of both well-being and politics; issues of reconciliation may at times be paid lip service to conform to requests from the international community.[6] Thus, reconciliation initiatives may be signals more to the international community than to the population. Factors such as the character and the genuineness of the reconciliation initiative, which may in turn be affected by how the conflict ended, may influence how the reconciliation initiative is perceived by the people, and thus, how it will effect reconciliation (Brounéus 2007). If the conflict ended in victory for one party or by a negotiated peace agreement will effect to what extent the former enemy must be taken into account in such initiatives.

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6   Personal communication with Professor Peter Wallensteen, Uppsala University, Sweden, May 9, 2007.

Nevertheless, symbolic acts by political leaders indicating remorse in order to promote reconciliation have been an increasingly frequent phenomenon over the last years. German Chancellor Willy Brandt was a pioneer, falling to his knees in the Old Jewish Ghetto in Warsaw in 1970, gesturing an apology for Germany's atrocities during World War II. Other examples include the IRA apologizing for having killed civilians in its 30-year anti-British campaign, and the Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi in 2001 expressing remorse for the Korean suffering under Japanese rule during World War II. The UN Secretary General Kofi Annan apologized to Rwanda for the UN's inability to act and prevent the 1994 genocide; former US president Bill Clinton did the same. Official acknowledgment of, and expression of remorse for, past wrongs has a significant role in today's world politics.

Political initiatives for reconciliation within a country after war can also be made in official statements, either to disclose a perception of what kind of atmosphere the government believes should be present in society between former enemies or to demonstrate that a clear strategy has been decided upon at the political level to promote reconciliation. Political initiatives for reconciliation include initiating judicial measures such as a truth commission, building political institutions while taking earlier conflictual ethnic divisions into account, and through constitutional restructuring and legislation. Through legislation, behaviour is regulated which can be used for reconciliation. For example, by criminalizing ethnic violence and discrimination, behaviour must change, and slowly with time, this will also affect attitudes and emotions. Increased awareness among top-level leaders regarding the importance of official self-reflection and acknowledgement of past atrocity committed by the state does seem important for reconciliation. Such concerns would be of importance to development assistance and the international community when considering how to support the work for reconciliation at the highest political level.

Reconciliation and Security

Many victims and witnesses reported feelings of fear and abandonment on the return to the homes after testifying. Security for the accused when returning to their homes communities has been a major concern.

In most truth commissions, survivors testify in public. In South Africa, for example, the hearings were broadcasted on the radio and television as a step in involving the whole nation in the process of reconciliation. Very rarely, the proceedings are performed behind closed doors or the survivor given anonymity toward the accused. Many victims and witnesses in the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) reported feelings of fear and abandonment on the return to the homes after testifying (Stover 2004). Similarly, witnesses in the South African TRC described being stigmatized, abandoned and threatened by their community as a result of participating in the TRC (Backer 2007). Likewise, security for the accused when returning to their homes communities has been a major concern for the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR).[7] However, security risks are not included in the theoretical literature on truth telling and reconciliation.[8]

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7   Personal communication with Justice Hassan B. Jallow, Prosecutor of the ICTR, in Uppsala, Sweden, February 1, 2007.
8   Luc Huyse importantly points out the significance of a minimum of security for a process of reconciliation as well as of the protection of members of truth commissions (Huyse 2003, 2003) as does Hugo van der Merwe (van der Merwe 1999), however, this overview has failed to find any discussion in the literature on security risks as an *effect* of the reconciliation process.

In Rwanda, where the largest officially driven reconciliation process in the world today is taking place (over 20 000 village tribunals are underway, called the *gacaca,* involving the entire population through mandatory participation) the issue of public testimony is carried to an extreme. Here, the village assembles to hear witnesses and the accused perpetrator, thus the witness is surrounded by neighbors and family members of the accused.[9] Recent research in Rwanda suggests security should be included into the truth, justice and reconciliation equation.

In this research, insecurity as a result of the truth telling process emerged as one of the most crucial issues at stake (Brounéus 2007).[10] Interviewed witnesses were threatened before the *gacaca* to deter from giving testimony, during the hearings to quiet them, and after, as punishment. This study suggests a novel understanding of the complexity of reconciliation at the grassroots level and raises questions about the relationship between truth commissions and security. If security is threatened, this may lead to a number of outcomes: physical injury, psychological anxiety and ill-health, an increase of violence in order to silence the truth, acts of revenge from either group, or skewed testimonies leading to a distorted picture of the past which may lay the grounds for renewed conflict.[11] In designing reconciliation processes for a nation, the individual participants must be taken into account. It is at this level, between former enemies, where the cycles of violence risk to be renewed.

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Truth Telling and Reconciliation

Reconciliation is the pragmatic work of changing behaviours, attitudes and emotions between former enemies. Truth telling is one of the most important components of reconciliation processes around the world. In the following we will briefly highlight three additional concerns for reconciliation with regard to truth telling: trauma, reparation, and culture.

Truth telling and trauma

The underlying assumption in much of the peacebuilding literature, as well as in political rhetoric, is that truth telling is cathartic or healing and thereby will advance reconciliation. However, there is very little empirical knowledge of these processes. As Kotzé observes: "We still await studies about the psychological impact

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9 The crimes of the genocide in Rwanda have been divided into three categories: Category 1 consists of instigators and leaders of the genocide and sexual violence; Category 2: killings and serious attacks that may or may not have caused death; Category 3: offences against property. The accused in Category 1 are tried in the national courts or the ICTR (International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda). Accused in Categories 2 and 3 are treated in the gacaca (pronounced "gatchatcha") courts in their home communities. Gacaca literally means 'grass' in Kinyarwanda, referring to the tradition of assembling outdoors on the grass for the proceedings. The gacaca can be seen as a *functional equivalent* to a truth and reconciliation commission.

10 This research project, "The gacaca and psychological health", is funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) which is gratefully acknowledged.

11 A recent report from Human Rights Watch, "Killings in Eastern Rwanda" (January 2007), gives worrying information on this subject: two incidents of reprisal killings were reported in November 2006, now against Hutu. In the first incident, after the murder of a genocide survivor, eight Hutu, including five children, were killed in a reprisal attack the same day by a group of genocide survivors. In the second incident, three Hutu men died in alleged extrajudicial executions by the police after the murder of an Inyangamugayo (gacaca judge). These incidents have not been followed up by the police and thus the "culture of impunity", which is much discussed by the government, risks to continue.

of truth commissions" (Kotzé 2002). DeLaet states that "scholars and practitioners of transitional justice must give greater attention to individual psychological processes [in truth commissions] if they genuinely believe healing and reconciliation are integral to promoting peace and justice in the long term" (DeLaet 2006). Considering that it is "the victims' suffering that is now at the core of how truth commissions operate" (Hamber 2006), it is their experience that requires analysis. In addition, psychological research would suggest a contrasting expectation of truth telling, namely, that there may be risks for retraumatization. Preliminary findings from a survey in Rwanda on the gacaca and psychological health as well as the above mentioned in-depth interviews in Rwanda support this hypothesis (Brounéus 2007).

Official acknowledgement of past atrocity and injustice is important because it validates past experiences and may help restore dignity and self-esteem. However, to speak of traumatic wounds, is difficult, painful, and may lead to stigmatization.

Official acknowledgement of past atrocity and injustice is important for working with individual traumatic experience because it validates past experiences and may help restore dignity and self-esteem. However, to speak of traumatic wounds, which often have left feelings of deep humiliation, shame, and guilt, is difficult, painful, and may lead to stigmatization. It is of great importance how the talking and listening is done and that the victim is aware that revealing may not lead to instant healing (Backer 2007; Hamber 2006; Stover 2004).

Truth commissions rely on the survivors' participation, but also on the accused, on witnesses who were affected through their family members, on the truth commission staff. The proceedings affect neighbours and those who were not yet born at the time of the conflict – whether by radio and television broadcast or in the form of attending village tribunals as in Rwanda. With regard to this massive national impact of truth commissions, Gibson's South Africa survey mentioned above raises one interesting question: do truth commissions lead to more reconciliation amongst the people who were not directly affected by the conflict by giving them a deeper understanding of the past even though no effect on reconciliation is seen in victims or those who were directly involved? If this is the case, truth commissions may play a vital role at the national level of reconciliation. However, as we know there may be risks for those on which these processes depend, the policy implications are straightforward: we must take risk into account when designing reconciliation processes in order to minimize detrimental effects for the people at the focal point. Here, development support can serve a crucial function.

Truth telling and reparations

Peace and security are essential for reconciliation. Studies show that post civil war societies are more likely to experience civil war again than societies with no prior experience of war. Research suggests that improvement in economic well-being together with increased political openness significantly decreases the risk of experiencing war anew (Walter 2002). As war greatly strains the economy, there is a risk for a trap of economic deterioration and repeated conflict that may also spill over in neighbouring countries, leading to instability in the region and the risk of expanded conflict (Collier and Sambanis 2002). So, how does economy relate to reconciliation? Firstly, economic development seems essential for peace, and peace in turn is fundamental for reconciliation. Secondly, survivors of atrocity and injustice have often been denied access to large parts of society such as

education, jobs, housing, and medical care. In postconflict societies, the gaps are often vast between former perpetrators and survivors in all areas, not the least regarding economic well-being. If these gaps are not addressed, economic inequality will undermine relation-building and provide a basis for further conflict.

For reconciliation in particular, the importance of economic reparations in the work of truth commissions around the world has become unmistakable. Money can never compensate the death of loved ones but can help a surviving family build a better life as well as serve as "…an official, symbolic apology" (Hayner 2001). In a recent study investigating how victims experienced economic reparations, Byrne conducted in-depth interviews with Black South African survivors of human rights violations during apartheid (Byrne 2007). Three major themes emerged from these interviews. First, some survivors attributed a literal meaning to the money they had received ("just money to feed the family"), for others it held a symbolic meaning ("acknowledgment of past suffering"). Second, the survivors described their current suffering and unfulfilled needs despite the economic reparations they had received, for example a lack of access to health care. Third, the survivors spoke of their disappointment with the government after having received reparations: they felt betrayed and that the government no longer recognized them as survivors of apartheid or recognized contributions they had made. Other reports from South Africa indicated that failing to deliver promised financial reparation may lead to decreased support in the reconciliation process and renewed feelings of anger and humiliation in survivors (van der Merwe 2001; Vandeginste 2003).

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Reports from South Africa indicated that failing to deliver promised financial reparation may lead to decreased support in the reconciliation process and renewed feelings of anger and humiliation in survivors.

Policy implications for reconciliation involve the following factors: supporting governments in delivering financial reparations to survivors and family members of those killed or missing for giving testimony in truth commissions. How reparations should be administered should preferably be decided in dialogue with the surviving community, who know their own situation best and who have suggestions if asked (Byrne 2007). Economic development must also reach those who choose not to take part in a truth commission through projects seeking to reduce the postconflict gaps in society and thereby strengthen relation-building.

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Truth telling and culture

Culture is the rich and complex blend of beliefs, attitudes, and behaviour regarding everything from food to art to politics and religion in a society. Culture shapes how we perceive ourselves and others. Violence, fear and hatred during war result in the modernization of old myths and stereotypes to explain one's own or some other group's behaviour – and thereby justify whatever gruesome atrocities are committed. After the war, the societal and cultural fabric is drenched with these beliefs. They can be seen in how history is described, how the language is used, in education, the media, theatre etc. In order to live in peace, these beliefs must be questioned and transformed. The changing of stereotyped beliefs is a crucial step in the process of reconciliation.

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The search for sustainable peace in a society after conflict must begin from its own roots, importing from outside whatever can be of use, but basing the society's transformation on its own unique set of traditions and cultural heritage.

The search for sustainable peace in a society after conflict must begin from its own roots, importing from outside whatever can be of use, but basing the society's transformation on its own unique set of traditions and cultural heritage. The importance of acknowledging the power of cultural heritage and tradition for postconflict relation-building has been discussed in the literature (Assefa 2001; Bloomfield 2003). A well-known example is the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission's use of the African notion *ubuntu. Ubuntu* entails that humanity is intertwined, a person is a person through other people; we are human because we belong. The misconduct of one person reduces the *ubuntu* of everyone while good deeds increase the ubuntu and well-being of all. Thus, reconciliation was part of restoring ubuntu in both victims and former perpetrators, for everyone is linked together. In this way, the TRC brought together its mission for national reconciliation, which often used Christian vocabulary, with the traditional African cultural heritage in the attempt to pave the way for reconciliation (Tutu 1999).

The religious and in particular Christian undertones of the term reconciliation for many people should be considered. Reconciliation between God and humanity through Jesus is a fundamental theme in Christianity. The Bible's concept of justice emphasizes interpersonal reconciliation, and focuses on compassion, mercy and forgiveness. In contrast, in the Buddhist tradition for example, compassion rather than forgiveness is stressed. The fundaments of the Buddhist Middle Path are acceptance, tolerance, and above all compassion. In a study from Cambodia, some interviewees suggested that truth commissions are a Christian concept as they are based on "confessing and forgiving" (Lambourne 2002). One interviewee explained that it would not be applicable to Cambodian tradition where, in accordance with Buddhism, people who have committed crimes will always be held responsible for them – there is no God who will ultimately forgive. Another interviewee argued on the same lines but drew the opposite conclusion, saying that it would be easy for Cambodians to forgive because they believe the perpetrators will be punished in the next life.

Awareness of the Christian connotations 'reconciliation' may have in Christian versus non-Christian cultures appears important for policy.

Awareness of the Christian connotations 'reconciliation' may have in Christian versus non-Christian cultures appears important for policy. Similarly, supporting local and culturally grounded initiatives for reconciliation will have the highest legitimacy and sustainability in the long run.

Concluding Remarks

There is no magic formula for reconciliation. Each reconciliation process needs to be designed according to the specific context: the country, the conflict the country has been through, the culture and traditions it has that can strengthen reconciliation. Hearing the survivors and the community is essential in all initiatives for development and reconciliation.

We urgently need empirical research to learn of general trends regarding promises and pitfalls for reconciliation processes. To date we only have a handful of empirical studies on reconciliation and no conclusions can be made. We need evaluations of reconciliation processes, measurements of attitudes, behavior, and emotions towards the other group before, during, and after the reconciliation initiatives are taken. Carefully designed systematic comparative research is needed, to see what lessons can be learned from detailed case studies and from comparisons between a larger number of cases. Despite the best intentions, there are risks involved and we must learn how to improve reconciliation processes for building peace.

Systematic comparative research is needed. Despite the best intentions, there are risks involved and we must learn how to improve reconciliation processes for building peace.

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