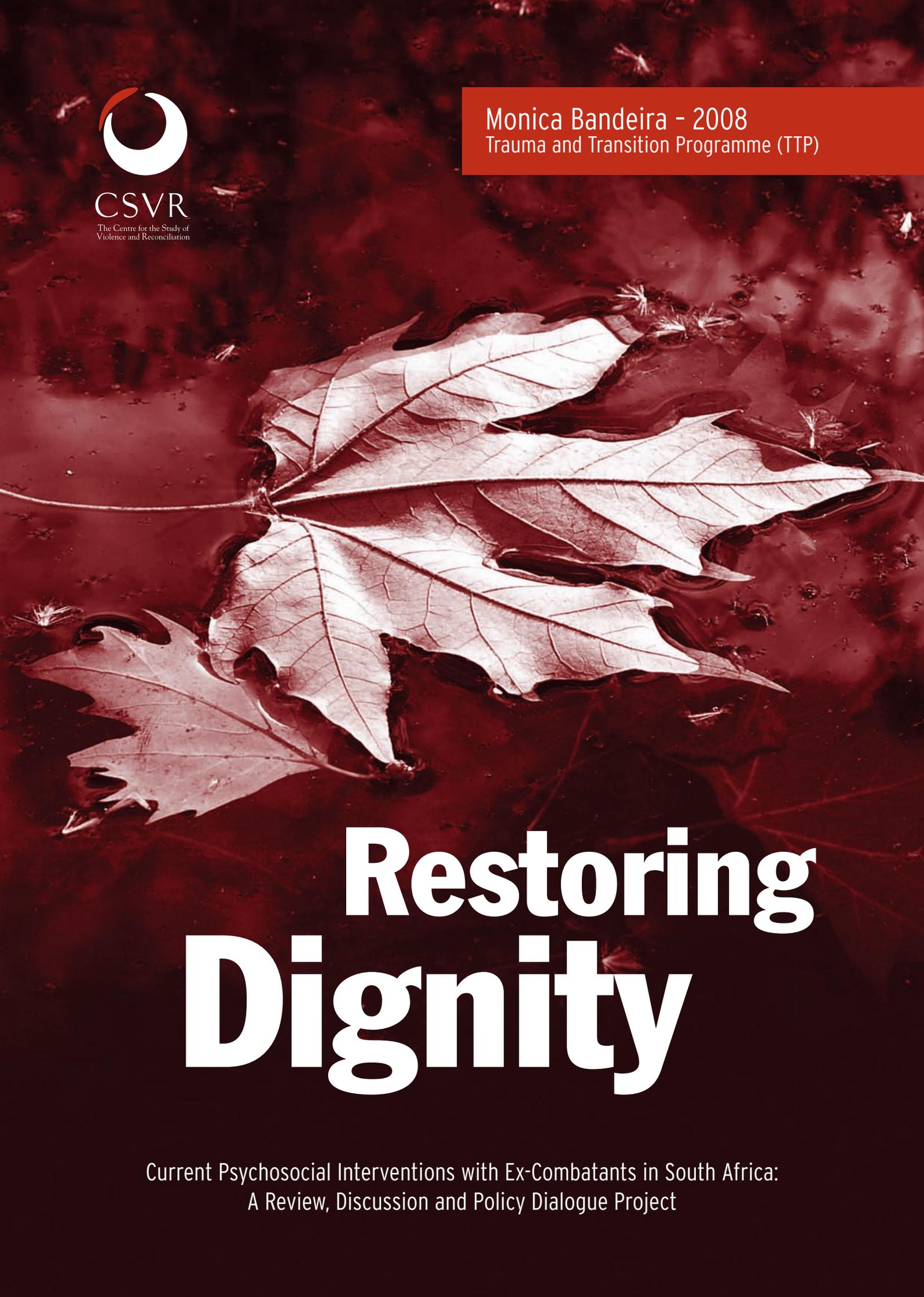




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The Centre for the Study of
Violence and Reconciliation

Monica Bandeira - 2008
Trauma and Transition Programme (TTP)



Restoring Dignity

Current Psychosocial Interventions with Ex-Combatants in South Africa:
A Review, Discussion and Policy Dialogue Project

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS:

ANC	African National Congress
APLA	Azanian People's Liberation Army
AZANLA	Azanian National Liberation Army
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
CSVr	Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
IGA	Income Generating Activity
MK	Umkhonto we Sizwe
MVAB	Military Veterans' Affairs Bill
NGO	Non- Governmental Organisation
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
SADF	South African Defence Force (pre-1994)
SANDF	South African National Defence Force (post-1994)
SDU's	Self-Defence Units
SPU's	Self-Protection Units
TTP	Trauma and Transition Programme
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
VA's	Veterans Associations

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Countries that have been through transition find themselves faced with the task of (re)building political, economic and social stability. One of the main areas of concern for countries that have experienced some form of conflict on the path towards democracy (like South Africa) is the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants. DDR programmes have been developed and implemented across the continent. According to President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah of Sierra Leone (Harsch, 2005), long-term stability depends on the existence of a comprehensive DDR programme. In reality, however, these programmes tend to fall short of being comprehensive.

In countries where aspects of the DDR process were poorly managed, such as South Africa, the effects are still being felt today. According to Everatt & Jennings (2006), the demobilisation process in South Africa was riddled with difficulties. Many ex-combatants were not included and the process was characterised by several administrative problems. They go on to describe the process as “a complete mess” (2006, p.21) and suggest that due to this it is not surprising that many ex-combatants continue to struggle.

Although the number of ex-combatants in South Africa is yet to be agreed upon, according to Williams, Department of Defence policy analyst, there could be as many as 150,000 (in Cock, 2004).

Most DDR programmes tend to be short-term and technical without much focus on the longer-term psychosocial challenges faced by ex-combatants. The recognition of the importance of dealing with these issues has mostly been taken up by Non- Governmental Organisations (NGO's), who are often faced with several challenges.

Despite the obstacles a number of organisations in South Africa have engaged and continue to engage with the psychosocial needs of ex-combatants in an attempt to assist with reintegration. There has, however, been little information gathered on these interventions or an evaluation of the impact of these on the lives of the ex-combatants. In addition, little to no dialogue has taken place with “government” on the role it can and/or should continue to play in the psychosocial reintegration of ex-combatants.

One of the main challenges facing all those involved in this sector is that ex-combatants do not exist in isolation. The South African reality is that there are a number of groups that are clearly disadvantaged, marginalised and as a result, in need of special attention. This makes it increasingly difficult for both ex-combatants and organisations to justify that resources be allocated specifically to them. The researcher departs from the principle that there is enough evidence to indicate that South African ex-combatants are in fact a group that should receive special attention.

The organisations interviewed for this research work mostly with ex-combatants that belonged to the liberation forces. As a result, this report does

not look at the psychosocial difficulties of ex-combatants of the South African Defence Force (SADF). This group, however, is one that requires more attention and research into their current situation.

A search of the psychosocial services available for ex-combatants in different countries produces a clear difference between developed and developing countries. One of the striking differences is the amount of literature available on this topic (with little being produced by developing countries). Based on the available information, it is clear that a number of developed countries have comprehensive, state-funded initiatives aimed exclusively towards ex-combatants. Due to the availability of resources many of these countries have been able to conduct extensive research into the effectiveness of different interventions with ex-combatants, something South Africa can learn a great deal from. It should not be forgotten, however, that the South African context is in many ways different to other countries and in some ways unique, which will influence any psychosocial interventions. A balance between contextually appropriate approaches and evidence-based ones (usually from developed countries) should be sought.

Project Goal

The project aims to empower ex-combatants to engage in policy dialogue with key stakeholders on addressing their psychosocial needs. This will be achieved through facilitating their engagement in evaluating and identifying gaps in the psychosocial services available to them.

Methodology

The researcher used qualitative methods of data collection and analysis for the study. This decision was based on the fact that this project sought to gain more in-depth understanding of the topic. Instruments with both highly structured and semi-structured questions were used. This ensured some standardisation across the sample while allowing for openness to divergent themes. The study was divided into two parts; one focused on organisations providing assistance or working with ex-combatants and the other focused on the ex-combatants themselves. This approach allowed for cross-validation of experiences. It was important to get the perspectives of both groups in order to provide a clearer understanding.

As the study attempted to discover what psychosocial interventions for ex-combatants exist in South Africa, all organisations providing such assistance to this group were sought. Six organisations that offer psychosocial services to ex-combatants in South Africa were identified. A total number of 20 ex-combatants participated in four focus group discussions, one of which took place in Cape Town. One group was conducted with only women. Qualitative content analysis, more specifically, summarising content analysis was used to analyse the data obtained.

Results and analysis

The results were discussed in two sections; the first incorporates the analysis of the focus group discussions held with ex-combatants while the second incorporates the analysis of the interviews held with organisational members involved in work with this group.

Focus Group Discussions with Ex-combatants:

It is clear from the discussion that although some ex-combatants took initiative in approaching the organisation(s) for help themselves, a number of them did not take the initiative on their own. Some describe being sent by the Veterans Association (VA) to which they belong (who may have seen them in need of assistance). Others say that they were approached by the organisation, not the other way around.

The motivating factors ex-combatants expressed in relation to approaching these organisations (i.e. isolation; psychosocial assistance; perceived benefits and altruism) do seem to express a need for psychosocial support. The hope for additional benefits, however, immediately highlights the need for economic empowerment that remains a constant throughout the discussions.

The two most common ways in which ex-combatants found out about the organisations they approached were through their VA's and through other comrades. Most participants did not consider other options as they were only aware of one. Those that did gave the following reasons for choosing the particular organisation: being explained clearly what the intervention would entail; having a history with the organisation; the intervention being linked to skills training; being promised money or because they offered a good programme.

The majority of participants were able to describe a variety of activities they participated in. Most reported participating in counselling or training. The descriptions relating to the content of the interventions focused mainly on psychosocial themes. These could be divided into intrapersonal (i.e. internal processes) and interpersonal (i.e. processes relating to our contact with others). Ex-combatants ability to reflect on the content of the interventions they participated in seems to indicate that they engaged with the experience and understood what the organisations were trying to achieve.

A number of ex-combatants said that they gained nothing from the interventions. Some went on to explain how the interventions brought back painful memories. Some even took a cynical stance and said that all they gained was a "certificate" or a "good meal". Other ex-combatants reported a number of gains and even among those that reported gaining nothing, upon further probing they were able to discuss several gains. The most mentioned gain was related to their ability to manage their anger. Most of the reasons could be grouped into: increased sense of agency; psychological gains; social gains; and the beginning of a journey. Ex-combatants raised a number of concerns relating to the organisations; the content of the activities offered; the lack of post-activity support or follow-up; and unemployment as a main concern. The greatest problem not to be solved by the interventions was

financial difficulties. This was expressed as the need for money or housing. Others mentioned that their anger was not dealt with while some just stated that they *“Still need more help.”*

Almost all of the ex-combatants interviewed felt that organisations should continue to work with them. Some felt that organisations would need to change the way in which this happens. Suggestions that follow-up be added or that ex-combatants should direct the interventions themselves were made. Ex-combatants are clearly able to recognise the benefits that organisations offer them as well as the unmet psychosocial needs amongst other ex-combatants. They also highlight the complexity involved in trying to address these needs and offer suggestions to organisations to include them in their planning as a way to improve services.

For many of the respondents, basic needs for employment, housing, financial assistance, and access to health care were the most pressing challenges faced by ex-combatants. Psychological challenges were also recognised some of which were linked to the fact that their basic needs are not being met. Some felt that they also faced challenges posed by other people such as lack of support from the community and their leaders and that their contribution has not been recognised. One of the consequences of these challenges, which is of some concern, was that they feel that they have no other option but to turn to crime.

According to ex-combatants the reasons for them not achieving their goals are varied. Most placed the responsibility or cause of the constraints externally. The biggest one mentioned was the lack of access to jobs and money. Some explained that many ex-combatants are too old to be employed by “government” (who seek younger and fitter men and because they *“had”* to commit crime their criminal record prevents them from working for “government”) but too young to receive pension. They are therefore stuck in the middle.

A great deal of concern was raised in terms of the VA’s and problems amongst ex-combatants. They explained that there is poor information-giving from the VA’s and a feeling by many that these are only concerned with their own pockets. Ex-combatants felt strongly that they should be given the opportunity to direct interventions themselves. They expressed the need for interventions that would provide opportunities for them to improve their economic situations as well as address their psychosocial needs. Some recommended the establishment of a Ministry of Veterans Affairs.

Despite ex-combatants criticisms of the organisations and their interventions, it seems that in a number of ways they clearly continue to benefit from participating in those activities. Ex-combatants reported feeling more confident now and not feeling so alone. Some felt that the interventions created a basis for healing while others said that they continue to use the following: mediation; anger management; and life skills. The benefits are not extensive however, if compared to their aims and should be critically explored by organisations. In

which ways are they having an effective impact and in which ways are they not?

Once again ex-combatants felt that psychosocial interventions are not sufficient. These need to be accompanied by interventions that will address their economic needs. Respondents also indicated that organisations needed to be cautious in their approach to resolving psychosocial issues. They felt that probing was problematic as it brought back memories they did not want to deal with.

Although most ex-combatants could not identify any interventions for them offered by “government”, some were able to mention a few. Most of these were limited or surrounded by problems. Respondents felt that “government” should be addressing most of their basic needs; monitoring organisations providing services to ex-combatants and addressing corruption in relation to pensions. Numerous attempts to engage with “government” have been made but most have proven to be unsuccessful and have only resulted in empty promises. All ex-combatants said they were willing to talk to “government” and that it is the “governments” interest to engage with them.

The research included a woman’s only group as a way of looking at differences or similarities to male ex-combatants and in order to give women a more prominent voice. Through the analysis however, it was found that the female participants did not produce categories (themes) that contrasted a great deal with what their male counterparts presented. There were a few themes that women did seem to focus on more than male ex-combatants. These warrant further investigation and include their concern about: the welfare of their children (including the impact that them being ex-combatants is having on their children and their own ability to parent effectively); other ex-combatants (female ex-combatants seemed to express more concern over comrades needs and/or assisting their comrades than male ex-combatants); issues affecting women such as domestic violence and prostitution.

Interviews with organisational respondents:

Initially organisations tended to focus their interventions on issues related to reintegration and providing psychosocial support. All the organisations said that the focus of their interventions with ex-combatants has changed over time. The most cited reasons were that they have developed broader objectives (e.g. to include access to job opportunities) or have become more holistic. Other reasons included: seeing the need and coming into contact with other organisations and deciding to engage in combined projects.

Organisations have used different avenues to recruit ex-combatants into the activities they offer. Most recruitment was done through: the VA’s; networks with other organisations; contacts made over time; word of mouth; rural outreach; and referrals. When asked about selection criteria most organisational respondents said that they were very open as it could not be too restrictive.

The activities offered to ex-combatants fell within four focus areas: psychological assistance; creating support systems; economic empowerment; and advocacy. Organisational respondents also described the content focus of their activities in some detail. These could be grouped under three main themes, namely: soft skills development; psychological healing; and group processes. Not many of the organisations could elaborate on how their interventions attempt to ensure a lasting impact which raises some concern. For some organisational respondents this was done through an empowerment framework whereby ex-combatants are empowered with knowledge and skills to cope with things like their symptoms as well as what they can do for themselves. Others say that a lasting impact is achieved through providing some support after the intervention. For many organisations, ensuring lasting impact and monitoring and evaluation were confused.

When asked about M&E most organisations recognised its importance. Their M&E activities could be divided into unstructured (informal); semi-structured and structured approaches. Organisational respondents were able to reflect on the shortcomings of their attempts to monitor and evaluate (M&E) their interventions. By in large there has been little to no serious evaluation of the interventions over the long term. Attempts to monitor and evaluate seem to have lacked planning and structure. The validity of the information they gathered is highly compromised by factors such as: asking for feedback immediately after the intervention; and having those who conducted the intervention ask the feedback (or even someone from their organisation). This is, however not surprising, given the limited resources available, there is a tendency to recognise the importance of M&E but view it as something with less priority over project work. This needs to be seriously questioned and revisited. To what degree should interventions continue regardless of their impact?

When asked to talk about some of the challenges they face in doing this work many discussed the personal, often negative, impact it has had on them. Organisational respondents also mentioned some challenges posed by ex-combatants during the activities as well as external/contextual challenges that impact on their work but over which they have little or no control. It is clear that for many organisational workers this work is particularly challenging. It would be important for ex-combatants and ex-combatant structures to acknowledge the work that they do and, for some the level of commitment they have. It would seem that the importance of acknowledgement and recognition expressed by ex-combatants could equally be given to organisational workers. This does raise concerns in relation to compassion fatigue¹ and vicarious traumatisation² and whether or not these are sufficiently addressed.

¹ Compassion fatigue refers to the emotional and physical stress the caregiver experiences when trying to help others overcome obstacles.

² Vicarious Traumatisation is the cumulative effect experienced by those working directly or indirectly with survivors of trauma.

When asked about the lessons they have learnt doing this work, interviewees were able to reflect on lessons related to: work with ex-combatants in general; the “how to” work with ex-combatants; as well as ex-combatants themselves. Upon reflecting on the lessons they have learnt through their work with ex-combatants, organisational respondents’ answers seem to reflect an underlying tiredness and disempowerment. If one takes into consideration the issue of compassion fatigue (highlighted above) this response could be understood. Their answers seem to lack the sophistication that could be expected of people with their experience and knowledge, which is of concern.

All the interviewees said that their organisations had plans to continue working with ex-combatants in the future. Most said that their future plans would seek to increase and/or expand their current activities and some discussed their ideas for future activities. According to organisational respondents, ex-combatants’ need for healing and recognition and the danger they pose to society are the main reasons for why continued work with them is important. Once again, many organisations assume that ex-combatants are psychosocially impaired. To what degree is this in fact the case? Should their fears regarding the danger ex-combatants pose be true, what should they be doing in relation to this? Are their interventions sufficient to prevent the “*unguarded missiles*” from being “*ignited*”?

According to organisational workers the most pressing challenges facing ex-combatants are lack of skills; lack of recognition and their isolation. These challenges provide some explanation as to why organisational members report a change in their plans for future work with ex-combatants. This seems to demonstrate an understanding of ex-combatants situation and needs. Both internal and external factors were identified that prevent ex-combatants achieving their goals. Psychological obstacles make it more difficult for ex-combatants to be able to reach their goals. Some constraints related to those in the ex-combatants’ environment such as “government”, stakeholders, and military structures were described.

When asked what interventions were needed for ex-combatants there was a great deal of agreement between organisational respondents. The most mentioned interventions were related to economic empowerment; followed by activities geared towards recognition; then psychosocial assistance; and finally support in strengthening the sector. Organisational workers recognise the importance of economic empowerment for ex-combatants. But for them, addressing these may fall beyond their ability or resources. They could feel helpless as they may not have the resources (finances or knowledge) available to meet this need even though they know it is important. They may then find themselves in a difficult situation of offering what they can. Given the interventions they mention here, organisations may need to ask themselves if the interventions they are offering are useful for the majority of ex-combatants or if they need to be far more selective. This is not an easy decision as organisational workers are aware of the great need and the lack of interest in addressing these.

As with the ex-combatants, organisational respondents were also asked about the role “government” has and should play in relation to ex-combatants. They also described how they have attempted to engage with “government”, the results of these attempts and their willingness to do so.

Summary of Recommendations

The discussion and recommendations chapter outlines cross cutting and general themes to emerge from the analysis made in the previous chapter. The major themes are discussed under the following headings:

- Political will
- Strengthening the sector: Platforms for consultation and discussion
- Economic Empowerment
- Psychosocial Healing
- Recognition

Each theme/category is accompanied by recommendations to relevant stakeholders such as: government departments; ex-combatants; veterans associations; and organisations working with ex-combatants.

There are a number of general recommendations that apply to all sections and to all stakeholders in general, namely:

- To increase their level of engagement with each other. It is only through consultation (from project idea phase and throughout) with all involved that interventions can begin to be empowerment driven. In all aspects of work with ex-combatants, finding different options for intervention and how these could be implemented should be done through providing opportunities for all to give real input.

Ex-combatants should begin to be viewed as individuals who have the potential to contribute a great deal to society if given the opportunity and support to do so.

To organisations:

- Allocate resources towards lobbying and advocacy with the aim of increasing political will or responsibility on the part of “government”. This could be linked to ensuring that the “Advisory Board on Military Veterans Affairs” and the “Office for Military Veterans’ Affairs” are established and fulfil their mandate as set out in the Military Veterans’ Affairs Bill (1999) as well as ensuring that relevant government departments (discussed below) begin to engage in assisting ex-combatants
- Develop strategies to achieve this in collaboration with VA’s
- Advocate and lobby for government resources to be allocated to the CSO providing interventions to ex-combatants
- Begin to discuss the possibility of their participation in creating a platform internally. This will influence their planning in terms of work plans, funding requests and resource allocation
- Engage with other stakeholders around planning for such a platform (including implications in terms of resources required)

- Submit funding proposals that cover the costs for development of the platform
- Continue to engage with different stakeholders
- Begin to engage “government” to participate in this platform
- Commit resources (human and financial) to the platform
- Use it to inform interventions with ex-combatants (through partnerships or independently, depending on the needs)
- Target “government” as a platform to participate through strategically targeted invitations and meetings. These attempts may need to be persistent and occur at different levels of government
- Make decisions regarding their engagement with activities aimed at the economic empowerment of ex-combatants. A suggestion could be to combine option a) and c) (above) whereby organisations continue to focus on their areas of expertise while at the same time lobby and advocate for economic empowerment opportunities to be created by “government” and the private sector. Any intervention(s) need to be accompanied by monitoring and evaluating processes
- Review existing interventions in terms of effectiveness through systematic monitoring and evaluating processes established during project conceptualisation that are not solely reliant on self-report measures
- Continue to provide interventions aimed at psychosocial healing of ex-combatants in collaboration with ex-combatants themselves
- Seek ways in which to address the economic empowerment of this group
- Research, document, monitor and evaluate interventions. This will benefit future interventions and could also assist others in similar contexts
- Engage in professional development by learning about what interventions have been developed for this group and how these may be adapted to the South African context
- Develop a clear theoretical framework that will inform interventions
- Challenge the assumptions held about ex-combatants
- Engage with other organisations doing similar work in the development of a South African-based model
- Engage in research on issues of unresolved trauma; issues of masculinity; poor self-esteem; difficulties with trust; substance abuse; anger; relationship difficulties; and communication difficulties as these relate to South African ex-combatants. Increased knowledge and understanding of these will facilitate intervention development
- Agree on ways in which acknowledgment could be obtained for ex-combatants
- Lobby and advocate for this with “government”

To Ex-combatants and VA's:

- Discuss different avenues for increasing “government” will and responsibility towards ex-combatants (e.g. the use of petitions; media campaigns or non-violent marches)

- Begin to discuss the possibility of the VA's participation in creating a platform with their executive
- Engage with other stakeholders around planning for such a platform (including implications in terms of resources required)
- Work with organisations to inform funding proposals that cover the costs for development of the platform
- Continue to engage with different stakeholders
- Begin to engage “government” to participate in this platform
- Commit resources (human and financial) to the platform
- Lobby “government” and private business to enter into partnership with them and psychosocial organisations, in order to address the economic difficulties faced by ex-combatants
- Attempt to access opportunities for ex-combatants to become more economically empowered.
- Invite organisations to increase knowledge around the psychosocial challenges ex-combatants could be facing and how they could be assisted. In turn, ex-combatants and their structures have an important role to play in terms of increasing organisational members' understandings of the needs of their members
- Also obtain more information about the activities offered by different organisations as well as who they are targeted towards
- Ensure that ex-combatants in need of psychosocial support gain access to services that are available
- Agree on ways in which acknowledgment could be obtained for ex-combatants
- Lobby and advocate for this with “government”

To “government”:

- Allow opportunities for engagement with stakeholders and the information they have gathered about the situation of ex-combatants (e.g. research)
- Begin to discuss the possibility of their participation in creating this platform internally. This will influence their planning in terms of work plans, funding requests and resource allocation
- Commit to participate on the forum
- Continue to engage with different stakeholders
- Ensure resource allocation to this platform
- Participate on the forum and give inputs
- Commit resources (human and financial) to the platform
- Enter into partnerships with organisations and VA's to develop opportunities for the economic empowerment of ex-combatants
- Ensure that the special pensions are being handled correctly and reaching the intended recipients
- Encourage private business to develop opportunities for ex-combatants
- Fast track the recognition of prior learning for this group, including the recognition of skills obtained through military training.

- “Government” should engage with organisations to develop a suitable programme for ex-combatants that will assist them to successfully reintegrate
- Increase the capacity of social workers and hospital staff to identify and support ex-combatants with specific psychosocial needs through training by experienced organisations
- Support organisations conducting this work through resources and acknowledgement
- Consult with ex-combatants about ways in which all can be acknowledged for their role in achieving democracy. This acknowledgement could include political or social acknowledgement and/or economic acknowledgement
- Work on the development of an effective database system of ex-combatants (in conjunction with the VA’s)

To Department of Defence:

- Ensure the establishment and effectiveness of the “Advisory Board on Military Veterans Affairs” and the “Office for Military Veterans’ Affairs” as set out in the Military Veterans’ Affairs Bill (hereafter referred to as the “Act”) of 1999. Both these structures should be communicating clearly and engaging with VA’s and CSO’s in addressing the needs of ex-combatants. The Act outlines the powers and duties of these two structures which are clearly central to the sector. Some key components include:
 - reviewing, developing and co-ordinating policy regarding military veterans’ affairs;
 - reporting to the Minister on the monitoring of the execution of approved military veterans’ policies by State departments and provincial executive authorities, and the rendering of inputs for required corrective action;
 - researching, defining, investigating, evaluating and promoting military veterans’ affairs on an integrated basis;
 - identifying legislative or administrative disparities, inequalities or unfair discrimination regarding the entitlements and the needs of military veterans and their dependants in order to rectify such disparities, inequalities or unfair discrimination;
 - reviewing existing legislation with a view to making new policy and promoting a consolidation of such legislation in order to provide for an integrated regulation of affairs of military veterans and their dependants;
 - formulating development programmes and submit proposals and recommendations to the relevant State departments and provincial executive authorities in connection with the development of military veterans’ affairs;
 - consulting the Department of Defence, and other State departments and provincial executive authorities, and all other persons, organisations or institutions that are concerned with military veterans’ affairs, to achieve the objects of this Act;

- conducting a survey of State-controlled and privately administered schemes or programmes dealing with any aspect of the affairs of military veterans;
- collecting data and information regarding all existing entitlements of military veterans and their dependants, and establishing a database on military veterans and military veterans' affairs, which must be updated regularly;
- forwarding proposals or recommendations in connection with any aspect of affairs relating to military veterans and their dependants to the Minister or the Advisory Board, or any other person or body, for purposes of obtaining advice, guidance, direction or endorsement;
- making inputs, through the Department of Defence, in respect of policy and budgets of State and provincial administrations relating to military veterans' affairs;
- negotiating with State departments, provincial executive authorities and non-governmental organisations to act as agents for the Department of Defence to carry out duties regarding military veterans
- Engage with the sector with interest and commitment to learning more about what should and could be done to assist ex-combatants
- The Department of Defence should be the coordinating body which should actively involve other departments in providing assistance to ex-combatants. Different "arms" of government have greater reach than CSO's and uniquely placed in communities to provide care to ex-combatants. The CSO's could be consulted and used to provide capacity building to different government personnel that would be responsible for this assistance

To the Department of Social Development (DoSD)

- The DoSD has a role to play in terms of provision of psychosocial support to ex-combatants and/or their families. This could take the form of greater awareness of some of the psychosocial difficulties ex-combatants may present with and how this could be best addressed.

To the Department of Labour:

- Look at possibilities of including ex-combatants within their quota system (other countries have used this strategy as a way to assist with the reintegration of ex-combatants).

To the Department of Education:

- The fast-tracking of recognition of prior learning of ex-combatants could be the responsibility of the Department of Education,
- Develop possibilities for ex-combatants to continue/complete their education.

To the Department of Health:

- Survey the health status of ex-combatants
- Create opportunities for increased/facilitated access to health services for ex-combatants

Private business:

- Acknowledge the role that ex-combatants have played in making it possible for business to prosper in South Africa by developing opportunities for economic empowerment specifically aimed at them. This should be done in partnership with organisations that can ensure psychosocial support.

Training institutions and Universities:

- Courses for professionals who may one day have to assist with the psychosocial needs of ex-combatants (e.g. social workers; psychologists; and psychiatrists) should include information on their specific needs. This could include content on the long-term impact of combat on ex-combatants and civilians as well as appropriate interventions

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Contextualising the issue

Countries that have been through transition find themselves faced with the task of (re)building political, economic and social stability. One of the main areas of concern for countries that have experienced some form of conflict on the path towards democracy (like South Africa) is the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants. DDR programmes have been developed and implemented across the continent. According to President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah of Sierra Leone (Harsch, 2005), long-term stability depends on the existence of a comprehensive DDR programme. In reality, however, these programmes tend to fall short of being comprehensive.

For most ex-combatants, giving up their weapons and leaving their military structure is easy, whereas reintegrating into civilian life may not be so simple (Harsch, 2005). Many experiences of DDR programmes across the continent, point towards the complex and long-term nature of the reintegration process. In 2005 a conference, focusing on how to improve African DDR programmes was held in Freetown, Sierra Leone (Harsch, 2005). The participants included experts and stakeholders from 15 African countries and a number of UN, donor and other international agencies. One of the main aspects to emerge from the conference was the acknowledgement of the need for reintegration to play a more central role in the DDR process. It was found that more attention and resources need to be given to reintegration which requires a long-term, continuous and integrated strategy.

According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) reintegration within the context of DDR is defined as: “the process through which ex-combatants return and (re)integrate into civilian life. Sustainable reintegration is achieved when the political, legal, economic and social conditions needed for the ex-combatants to maintain life, livelihood and dignity have been secured” (Reintegration in IDDR Programmes, 2005, p. 7). The reintegration of ex-combatants within the African context often involves numerous complexities. In many instances, ex-combatants are not a unified group but rather a heterogeneous collection of individuals (or groups of individuals) that in some instances belonged to opposing military structures. This poses a challenge to reintegration where ex-combatants must cope with the difficulties of reintegrating back into communities often alongside former “enemies”.

In countries where aspects of the DDR process were poorly managed, such as South Africa, the effects are still being felt today. According to Everatt & Jennings (2006), the demobilisation process in South Africa was riddled with difficulties. Many ex-combatants were not included and the process was characterised by several administrative problems. They go on to describe the process as “a complete mess” (2006, p.21) and suggest that due to this it is not surprising that many ex-combatants continue to struggle.

Although the number of ex-combatants in South Africa is yet to be agreed upon, according to Williams, Department of Defence policy analyst, there could be as many as 150,000 (in Cock, 2004). These ex-combatants represent various military formations including: Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA), Azanian National Liberation Army (AZANLA) and the South African Defence Force (SADF). Besides these, there were many people who were part of more or less organized paramilitary groups that struggled against the apartheid security forces for the liberation of South Africa. Some ex-combatants were involved in the so-called "border wars", others were involved in clashes with security forces within the townships, while others remained in exile fighting on a diplomatic level. As Jeffrey (1997) points out, there were also those involved in conflict between different liberation forces, notably members of the Self-Defence Units (SDUs) of the African National Congress (ANC) and the Self-Protection Units (SPUs) of the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP).

The involvement in the war impacted these individuals on a psychological, social and in some cases physical level. Due to the young age at which many ex-combatants joined the war as well as the length of participation many have argued that ex-combatants were unable to complete their education or develop non-military skills. Indeed, in a study conducted by Mokalobe, Mashike, Lamb and Cock (2006) where 410 ex-combatants from around the country were interviewed, it was found that approximately 60% of respondents did not complete their secondary schooling. However, more recent studies conducted in Namibia (LeBeau, 2006) and in South Africa (Everatt & Jennings, 2006) report something different. In the Namibian study it was found that 56% of ex-fighters (SWAPO) held a secondary or higher education level. The South African study interviewed 1196 ex-combatants in the Gauteng province and found that when compared to Gauteng Africans the number of ex-combatants with completed secondary or higher levels of education were similar. In addition to this, fewer ex-combatants had no formal schooling or had completed some primary education than the general population. Everatt and Jennings (2006) argue that based on this ex-combatants appear to have sufficient skills to compete in the labour market. The high unemployment rate of 70%, they argued, is "one of the largest legacies of their involvement in combat". The impact on the economy is large, as a significant number of individuals who have the skills to contribute are unable to do so. This apparent disparity between their qualification levels and employment rates seems to point to other, perhaps psychosocial, factors impeding their reintegration. It could be that their psychological state and interpersonal skills make it difficult for them to find and maintain jobs; that employers are reluctant to take on or keep ex-combatants; or a combination of both.

One could argue that the psychosocial impact of their experiences during the struggle combined with other social and psychological pressures they may have experienced since their return have affected their ability to function effectively within society today. For some ex-combatants, being involved in the war meant that they were exposed to traumatic events. Although some would have recovered well there are others who continue to suffer the psychological consequences. The context in which they experienced these

events was usually characterised by poor social support systems (away from family and friends); a soldier mentality that saw psychological distress as a weakness; isolation; and continuous fear. According to Ford (1999), this lack of protective factors increased their risk of psychological distress and to disorders such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Upon their return many were faced with new social and psychological stressors such as: reintegrating into a family they had not seen for long periods of time; adjusting from a soldier mentality and life to civilian life; poverty; unemployment; expectations of family members to provide financially; and coping with their already existing military traumas.

As a result, LeBeau (2006) suggests that ex-combatants may be suffering from “long-term psychological distress”. This could be manifested through some or many PTSD symptoms, personality changes as well as secondary/associated symptoms. In addition, the impact of some ex-combatants becoming involved in the struggle at a young age has translated into the formation of a lasting social identity (Marks & McKenzie, 1995). These youths continue to identify themselves strongly as “defenders of their communities”. The masculine identity formed during military training can also have lasting negative effects. Indeed, Vetten (1998) suggests that the conflicts are often transferred into the home and may continue long after the peace accords have been signed. All these factors point towards the importance and need of addressing the psychosocial needs of ex-combatants within the concept of “reintegration”.

Most DDR programmes tend to be short-term and technical without much focus on the longer-term psychosocial challenges faced by ex-combatants. The recognition of the importance of dealing with these issues has mostly been taken up by Non- Governmental Organisations (NGO’s), who are often faced with several challenges. This raises a number of questions that need to be addressed, namely:

- Does political will exist to ensure that ex-combatants are indeed effectively reintegrated into the community
- Is there sufficient consultancy between the major role-players in terms of this
- Have programmes been effectively implemented, monitored and evaluated
- Have suitable resources (financial and human) been provided to address these needs.

Rationale for research

Despite the obstacles a number of organisations in South Africa have engaged and continue to engage with the psychosocial needs of ex-combatants in an attempt to assist with reintegration. There has, however, been little information gathered on these interventions or an evaluation of the impact of these on the lives of the ex-combatants. In addition, little to no dialogue has taken place with “government” on the role it can and/or should continue to play in the psychosocial reintegration of ex-combatants.

For several years now, the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSV), mainly through the Trauma and Transition Programme (TTP) has attempted to address the psychosocial needs of a number of ex-combatants. Despite developing various types of psychosocial interventions (some in partnership with other service providers), it would seem that ex-combatants needs remain to a large extent unmet. Although some ex-combatants have undoubtedly benefited from these interventions, overall the impact of these interventions seems to fall short. Whilst reflecting on this a number of questions emerged, namely: do other organisations have the same experience; in which ways have different organisations attempted to meet these needs; what have they learnt that we could all learn from; what are the opinions of ex-combatants in relation to interventions that exist and should exist; what should “government” be doing; and finally, how can psychosocial interventions with South African ex-combatants be improved? This research attempts to find some answers to these questions.

One of the main challenges facing all those involved in this sector is that ex-combatants do not exist in isolation. The South African reality is that there are a number of groups that are clearly disadvantaged, marginalised and as a result, in need of special attention. This makes it increasingly difficult for both ex-combatants and organisations to justify that resources be allocated specifically to them. The researcher departs from the principle that there is enough evidence to indicate that South African ex-combatants are in fact a group that should receive special attention. This stance is based on the following:

- The impact of various aspects of their involvement in the war has left many ex-combatants more disadvantaged than others in terms of being able to access resources and opportunities that may exist;
- The sacrifices ex-combatants and their families have made for their country should be acknowledged and in some way rewarded;
- The threats made and anger expressed by ex-combatants raises concerns about the negative impact they could have on the country.

In the opinion of the researcher, the question of whether or not resources should go directly to this group has been sufficiently answered and justified. Indeed, Gear (2002) highlights that conventionally, demobilised ex-combatants who no longer form part of security structures are considered a vulnerable population. The questions that should now be debated are: how many resources and in which way should these resources be effectively used? It should also not be forgotten that the ex-combatant population is not limited to those involved in the struggle for democracy. The SANDF continues to engage in Peace Keeping operations and as such more ex-combatants will continue to be produced. The lessons learnt from work done with ex-combatants currently could be used to inform any interventions with this group and as such have an important role to play in the future.

The organisations interviewed for this research work mostly with ex-combatants that belonged to the liberation forces. As a result, this report does not look at the psychosocial difficulties of ex-combatants of the South African Defence Force (SADF). This group, however, is one that requires more

attention and research into their current situation. To a large degree some of the themes presented in this report could also be applied to ex-combatants from the SADF. Although exploration is necessary, issues around the need for acknowledgement; restoration of dignity and psychosocial healing may remain relevant. The need to explore the experiences of this group is vital but falls beyond the scope of this report.

Notes on terms used in this report

In this report the researcher has made use of a number of terms that should be clarified. “Ex-combatant(s)”, here, is used to refer to individuals who formed part of one of the many liberation forces described above (also referred to as “veterans”). A number of different military veterans associations exist in South Africa, most of which are linked to former liberation forces. In this report, these are referred to as “veterans associations” or “structures” (as they are often referred to by those in the sector). “Organisations” and “organisational workers” are used to refer to those who work with ex-combatants and/or provide services to them.

Lessons from other countries

A search of the psychosocial services available for ex-combatants in different countries produces a clear difference between developed and developing countries. One of the striking differences is the amount of literature available on this topic (with little being produced by developing countries). Based on the available information, it is clear that a number of developed countries have comprehensive, state-funded initiatives aimed exclusively towards ex-combatants. Although these interventions may vary between different countries, some of the common interventions across the United States of America (USA)³, Canada⁴, Australia⁵, and the United Kingdom (UK)⁶ include:

- Counselling (for individuals; families; couples and groups)
- Crisis counselling and support
- Telephonic counselling (often free and 24hrs)
- Information-giving to veterans and their families
- Peer counselling
- Peer support groups
- Referral and networking
- Intergenerational work

Common features of these interventions include that they are:

- Free (“government” paid)
- Professional (with some services offered by psychologists and social workers)
- Confidential

³ Information obtained from the website of the Department of Veterans Affairs: www.va.gov

⁴ Information obtained from the website of the: www.vac-acc.gc.ca

⁵ Information obtained from the website of the Department of Veterans Affairs: www.dva.gov.au

⁶ Information obtained from the website of the : www.veterans-uk.info

These countries' ability to provide this array of services to ex-combatants is obviously linked to differences in the availability of resources but could also be facilitated by other factors. Some of these include: the relatively homogenous nature of the ex-combatant population; the fact that they shared common enemies and that combat most often occurred beyond their own borders. Due to the availability of resources many of these countries have been able to conduct extensive research into the effectiveness of different interventions with ex-combatants, something South Africa can learn a great deal from.

It should not be forgotten, however, that the South African context is in many ways different to other countries and in some ways unique, which will influence any psychosocial interventions. A balance between contextually appropriate approaches and evidence-based ones (usually from developed countries) should be sought. It is clear that in the above-mentioned countries, ex-combatants are seen as people in need of different forms of support, including psychosocial and as such, a great deal of resources are allocated to ensure that their transition back to civilian life is supported. South Africa should keep this in mind in relation to the current SANDF as ex-combatants will continue to be produced. The interventions currently taking place or being developed could form a basis upon which all veterans (including future ones) could be assisted.

CHAPTER 2 – PROJECT GOAL, OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The project aims to empower ex-combatants to engage in policy dialogue with key stakeholders on addressing their psychosocial needs. This will be achieved through facilitating their engagement in evaluating and identifying gaps in the psychosocial services available to them.

The objectives of this project were to:

- Provide an overview of current psychosocial interventions with ex-combatants. This included an understanding of the assumptions upon which these interventions were based; what activities they involved and lessons learnt.
- Provide an integrated understanding of the psychosocial needs of ex-combatants and ways in which these have been in some way addressed through existing interventions.
- Consult with civil society and develop a set of recommendations to serve as the basis of ongoing policy dialogue with “government”.
- Use the information obtained to facilitate dialogue between ex-combatants, organisations working with ex-combatants and “government” on addressing the psychosocial needs of this group.

Methodology

a. Design

The researcher used qualitative methods of data collection and analysis for the study. This decision was based on the fact that this project sought to gain more in-depth understanding of the topic. Instruments with both highly structured and semi-structured questions were used. This ensured some standardisation across the sample while allowing for openness to divergent themes.

The study was divided into two parts; one focused on organisations providing assistance or working with ex-combatants and the other focused on the ex-combatants themselves. This approach allowed for cross-validation of experiences. It was important to get the perspectives of both groups in order to provide a clearer understanding. The remaining methodological points will be discussed in terms of these two approaches.

b. Sampling

Purposive sampling was employed and as expected snow-balling sampling was the strategy followed. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method (i.e. it is not random) where subjects are selected because of some pre-defined criteria(s). Purposive sampling allows the researcher to include participants that have different experiences and views. In snow-ball sampling, the sample is increased by asking participants if they know of others that meet the criteria.

As the study attempted to discover what psychosocial interventions for ex-combatants exist in South Africa, all organisations providing such assistance to this group were sought. Six organisations that offer psychosocial services to ex-combatants in South Africa were identified.

These were: Khulumani; Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation; Trauma Centre for Survivors of Violence and Torture; National Peace Accord Trust; Direct Action Centre for Peace and Memory; and Hearts of Men. It is recognised that there may be other smaller organisations or associations that engage with ex-combatant psychosocial support. The difficulty in identifying these during the research process highlights the lack of communication and coordination in this sector. The fact that all but one of the organisations found identify ex-combatants as a specific target group points to the need that exists in terms of providing psychosocial care. A few other organisations also have ex-combatants accessing their services but do not target these directly.

Due to the organisations included mostly focusing on work with ex-combatants from the liberation forces this report is limited to providing a picture of the psychosocial needs of this group to the exclusion of ex-SADF combatants.

In this study, the following criteria for inclusion for organisations providing assistance to ex-combatants were followed:

- A programme that had been running for longer than one year
- A focus on psychosocial services
- Having worked with at least 20 ex-combatants in the last year

The organisations found all fulfilled these selection criteria. Only one organisation, Sinani, was not included as the focus of their work has changed and they no longer have ex-combatants as a specific target group. All the organisations contacted that fulfilled the criteria agreed to participate and were therefore included.

Of the six organisations interviewed, three are based in Johannesburg and the other three are based in Cape Town. Although some of these organisations dated their work with ex-combatants back to the 80's most of the organisations included have been working with ex-combatants since the mid to late 90's. The areas of work of these organisations varies from psychological assistance; creating support systems; economic empowerment to advocacy. Two of the organisations do not consider themselves as "external" interventionists (or even organisations as such) as their approach involves ex-combatants helping ex-combatants or being an association⁷. The organisational workers involved in the different organisations vary from people with little or no formal education to those with post-graduate qualifications. Hence the work with ex-combatants is being conducted by, amongst others: volunteers, lay counsellors, social workers and psychologists.

⁷ For the purpose facilitating reading the terms "organisation" and "organisational workers/respondents", and "interventions" have been used to refer to all those interviewed.

The criteria used for the inclusion of ex-combatants in the research study included:

- Having been through the interventions offered by the organisations found
- Be over the age of 25

Most of the participants were found through contacts with ex-combatants while a small number were sent by the West Rand Veterans Association. A total number of 20 ex-combatants participated in four focus group discussions, one of which took place in Cape Town. One group was conducted with only women, which despite various attempts through the VA's and other contacts, comprised only of female ex-combatants from Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), the military wing of the African National Congress (ANC). A woman's only group was run as this group is often marginalised and excluded and as a way to begin to see to what extent this group was similar or different to their male counterparts. Although the initial sampling aimed at including ex-combatants from various military structures this did not occur completely as planned. In Johannesburg one group included only MK veterans while another included veterans from APLA, AZANLA, and the SDU's.

In Cape Town, initially it was planned that two focus groups would be conducted, one with MK veterans and another with those from other structures (APLA, AZANLA and SDU's or SPU's). However, despite attempts to find a sufficient number of ex-combatants to participate and due to a lack of time and resources it was decided that only one group discussion would be held with ex-combatants from different structures. Seven ex-combatants confirmed their attendance (4 from MK and 3 from APLA) but on the day, the APLA ex-combatants had to attend another meeting and arrived too late to participate (a few hours late). A number of participants were in exile, some were trained internally while others formed part of the SDU's. Most of the ex-combatants had contacted only one organisation for assistance although a number of participants had been through activities offered by two organisations. Most of the ex-combatants were aged between 30 and 40 years.

c. Instruments

The interview schedules for both the organisations and the focus group discussions were developed by the researcher with input from an external consultant and others within TTP (ex-combatant intern and Programme Manager). The instruments were developed in such a way that they would gather the information necessary to achieve the objectives of the project. As such, the instruments cover a variety of areas as they relate to psychosocial needs of ex-combatants.

In line with this, the interviews with organisations gained information related to the following:

- Organisational history in working with ex-combatants
- Organisational respondents involved in project
- Length of intervention(s)

- Number of ex-combatants assisted by project per year
- Activities in psychosocial interventions with ex-combatants
- Recruitment and Selection criteria
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Sustainability of project (in terms of long term impact)
- Problems or challenges experienced
- Lessons learned and plans for future work
- Views on “governments” role

Focus group discussions with ex-combatants who had been through these interventions gained information on:

- Their psychosocial needs at the time when they went for the intervention
- How they were recruited and reasons for joining the intervention
- Their description of the intervention including the activities
- What they found useful about the intervention
- What they found was not useful about the intervention
- Areas that were addressed by the intervention
- Areas that were not addressed by the intervention
- Perspective on selection, recruitment, implementation and termination of the project
- Impact of intervention after it was terminated
- Recommendations for future projects
- Views on “governments” role

d. Data collection methods

Interviews with organisational respondents were conducted by psychologists with some experience and content knowledge related to the psychosocial needs of ex-combatants. This was done as those interviewed were most often people with a great deal of experience in this field and it was important that the interviewer be able to understand the issues as well as when to ask for clarity. The focus group discussions were co-facilitated by an experienced social worker and an ex-combatant. This combination allowed for a balance between getting the information required and sensitivity to the process as well as increasing credibility with ex-combatants.

The organisational respondents were interviewed at their place of work. This was done so as to not inconvenience them by reducing the time they would need to take to participate. Each interview took between an hour to two hours to complete. The focus group discussions took place at CSVR offices (both in Johannesburg and Cape Town). The offices are both centrally located which helped as ex-combatants came from different areas. In addition, these venues were available free of charge. All the participants in the focus group discussions were given something to eat and drink as well as reimbursed transport money they may have paid to get to and from the venue. Participants were not told they would be given food or transport money beforehand as we did not want to influence their

decision to participate. The length of the focus group discussions varied between an hour-and-a-half to two-and-a-half hours.

All interviews with organisations were conducted in English as all interviewees were fluent in English. The focus group discussions were conducted in a combination of languages according to the ex-combatants preference which included: English, Xhosa, and Zulu.

e. Data analysis

Qualitative content analysis, more specifically, summarising content analysis was used to analyse the data obtained. In this process the original data was analysed following a number of steps that resulted in a summary of the main contents (Plattner, 2001). The data was therefore analysed and summarised until a number of categories (sometimes referred to as themes) were obtained. These categories (themes) are discussed below in relation to the questions asked as well as in relation to other topics that emerged during the discussion. The use of quotations throughout the analysis chapter serves to illustrate the categories (themes) and allows the voices of the participants to emerge.

f. Ethical considerations

The highest ethical standards were maintained through the following:

- The inclusion of only adults as participants.
- Explaining the purpose of the study appropriately and in detail
- Obtaining informed consent (all those interviewed except for the three organisations interviewed in Cape Town provided written consent);
- There were no implications for non-participation or withdrawal from the study, and participants were made aware of this;
- Confidentiality of individual participants was ensured through the use of pseudonyms in reporting;
- Participants were informed that they could access counselling services at the Trauma and Transition Programme of the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation if they felt it would be necessary;

CHAPTER 3 – RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Introduction

This chapter is divided into two sections; the first incorporates the analysis of the focus group discussions held with ex-combatants while the second incorporates the analysis of the interviews held with organisational members involved in work with this group. The results were obtained through content analysis and the categories that this analysis produced are presented according to the interview schedules. After each section, some critical questions are raised which are further discussed in Chapter 4 (Discussion and Recommendations).

Results and Analysis of the Focus Group Discussions with Ex-combatants

1) Ex-combatants motivation for approaching the organisation(s) for help

Ex-combatants were asked why they approached the organisations for assistance. One of the main reasons to emerge was their feelings of isolation followed by the need for assistance with psychosocial difficulties; perceived benefits; and altruism or the need to help other ex-combatants.

It is clear from the discussion that although some ex-combatants took initiative in approaching the organisation(s) for help themselves, a number of them did not take the initiative on their own. Some describe being sent by the Veterans Association (VA) to which they belong (who may have seen them in need of assistance).

“I did not believe in counselling or any other intervention because counselling is something that one can do him/herself, and I saw nothing wrong with myself. However, my structure, having realised that there was something wrong with me recommended that I get help.”

Others say that they were approached by the organisation, not the other way around. A few said that it was an opportunity they happened to come across and take.

Reasons for seeking assistance:

a. Isolation: “I didn’t have someone to talk to”

When exploring the reasons for why they approached the organisation many pointed to the isolation they felt. Some describe not having someone to talk to, or that no one was helping them.

“I don’t have somebody to talk to so when you go to [organisations name removed] you are able to meet new faces and all these and you are become relieved. Most of the time when you are alone you encounter many problems because you don’t talk about them and I’m one person when

I'm angry I go to the next person and cry and talk to him and from there I feel better."

b. Psychosocial assistance: "To heal"

Participants made references to many psychological and social difficulties that they were experiencing for which they sought assistance. Some of these included: anger; dealing with traumas during the struggle; coping with symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder – PTSD (e.g. nightmares and flashbacks); relationship difficulties; mistrust; difficulties with adjusting to family life; stress and depression. In an attempt to describe their motivation some spoke of the need to become relieved and a few of needing psychological help.

"...when you come back home after spending many years outside..., you(r) brothers and sisters they have developed (as) the other man have said, they already subtracted you from the set of your family. So they don't know you, they don't know who you are anymore, you have different character, you are used to be living in... the open field, and they are used to live that formal and collective life – family life. ...they no longer understand your character because there is something that has developed in you as a combatant, the discipline that is in you, you use that military discipline...which is...much more intensive than the family discipline. And your brothers and sisters they start to fear you. And also you don't understand – there are things that you don't – it is difficult to cope with at times."

c. Perceived benefits "I hoped it would change my conditions"

A number of participants referred to the hope, assumption or perception that their conditions of living would be improved by going through the intervention(s). Some say that they were promised employment or training, others spoke of wanting skills.

"...we were promised that there will be employment to alleviate our plight."

"...we were promised that we would do courses. We did not want to be paid for whatever we were going to do for them we just wanted skills training because a lot of us don't have skills."

d. Altruism "In order to help others you need to find your inner self"

Some ex-combatants say that their motivation to approach the organisation(s) for help was due to their need to assist others. On one hand they wanted to know what the intervention was about before sending other comrades to it and on the other it was linked to a more introspective motivation of realising that in order to heal others one must first be healed.

“I’m a curious person, so I wanted to know and to be able to help another person, one needs to find peace within oneself, find your inner self. So going to [organisational name removed] helped me find myself because I was not at peace with myself.”

It is interesting to note that some ex-combatants did not approach the organisations themselves but rather, were either sent by their structures or were approached by the organisations themselves. This raises questions around the relevance of the interventions as ex-combatants are not overwhelmingly seeking psychosocial assistance. It could also point to issues around where organisations are located and access to these. The motivating factors ex-combatants expressed in relation to approaching these organisations do seem to express a need for psychosocial support. The hope for additional benefits, however, immediately highlights the need for economic empowerment that remains a constant throughout the discussions.

2) How ex-combatants found out about the organisation(s) they accessed

The two most common ways in which ex-combatants found out about the organisations they approached were through their VA’s and through other comrades. They also found out about them through the media or the municipality or by the organisations approaching them directly. Other less common ways included: through another project; at a book launch or through their own searches.

This would seem to suggest that ex-combatants still maintain strong networks with other ex-combatants as well as the military structures they belonged to during the struggle. This raises questions around the concept of reintegration. To what extent does maintaining these connections inhibit re-integration into the community?

3) Choosing the one they did

Most participants did not consider other options as they were only aware of one. Those that did gave the following reasons for choosing the particular organisation: being explained clearly what the intervention would entail; having a history with the organisation; the intervention being linked to skills training; being promised money or because they offered a good programme.

“What made me choose...was that they sat down with me and explained everything to me. And our leadership always tell us that, at...you get R600.00 a month, they explained that, here we don’t pay people, we teach each other. So that you can be able to move on with your life and your mind to be opened.”

Here, ex-combatants raise some concerning issues around the motivation to participate in the different interventions as well as touch on their levels

of disempowerment. Are ex-combatants engaging in the appropriate interventions for their needs or as a way to access other (possibly perceived) benefits? In addition, are ex-combatants being given different options or are attempts being made to make them aware of different organisations and what they offer?

4) Activities participated in

The majority of participants were able to describe a variety of activities they participated in. They not only described activities but went on to discuss the content of these which has been discussed below. Most reported participating in counselling or training. Counselling either happened individually or within a group. Training varied in terms of receiving training in various soft skills or to be able to assist/support others (discussed below). Some respondents also spoke of participating in group discussions; eco-therapy; prayer; and linking with ancestors.

5) Content of interventions

The descriptions relating to the content of the interventions focused mainly on psychosocial themes. These could be divided into intrapersonal (i.e. internal processes) and interpersonal (i.e. processes relating to our contact with others).

a. Intrapersonal

Ex-combatants explained that the focus of the activities varied from: encouraging self-reflection; demilitarising them; trauma awareness; and talking about their lives.

“...they want to take you from the military ideology and bring you to civilian life so that you can be able to behave like a normal family member. They want to fix you basically. We already knew that we were no longer members of the military, but they did assist in certain areas that we were not aware of.”

b. Interpersonal

Other descriptions were linked to their ability to engage with those around them more effectively. These include: life skills; alternatives to violence; counselling skills; talking about their problems at home and how to be a normal family member. Mention was also made of praying and linking with their ancestors.

Ex-combatants ability to reflect on the content of the interventions they participated in seems to indicate that they engaged with the experience and understood what the organisations were trying to achieve. As can be seen in the quote above, however, the appropriateness of this focus is questioned.

6) What ex-combatants gained from the interventions: “If I didn’t get counselling maybe I would be in jail, a criminal or dead”

A number of ex-combatants said that they gained nothing from the interventions. Some went on to explain how the interventions brought back painful memories.

“...there is nothing that I gained from that program which was conducted at [location removed]. But it brought back the hatred and the bad memories of my – of the time I was in exile...And it brings down the memories which I sometimes I was trying to forget.”

Some even took a cynical stance and said that all they gained was a “certificate” or a “good meal”. Other ex-combatants reported a number of gains and even among those that reported gaining nothing, upon further probing they were able to discuss several gains. The most mentioned gain was related to their ability to manage their anger. Most of the reasons could be grouped into: increased sense of agency; psychological gains; social gains; and the beginning of a journey. A few said that they gained a lot from the intervention(s) as is evident in this quote:

“...it has helped a lot because now and then we had nightmares about things that...but I'm a secretive kind of person and I prefer to disclose on a one on one basis with the counselor because it is not easy for me to disclose in groups as some of the things are too sensitive. ...I was able to relieve some of the other things and I learnt about life skills but I still need more counseling because I cannot maintain a relationship because of the anger that I have and I really don't trust anyone except myself and sometimes I don't even trust myself in other things and that hurts me”

Some of the gains could be grouped in the following ways:

a. Increased sense of agency: “Able to motivate myself”

Many ex-combatants reported an increase in their own ability to: be independent; manage their anger; make good choices; cope with their situation; forgive and forget; and stop blaming. They also reported increase self-confidence and self-awareness.

“[Organisation name removed] trained me to be able to independent, so that when I am in trouble, I should have a way of solving a problem without fighting. [Organisation name removed] trained me to my open my mind, and don't focus only on one place and look at other places. To be reborn and forget who I was, even though it is difficult to erase all that, anger is still there. I can see the direction of where I am going, better than what I was ten years ago.”

b. Psychological gains

Ex-combatants reported feeling relieved after participating in the interventions. A few said that it helped them with their trauma; solved their problems or improved their lives. Some ex-combatants reported being able to forget bad experiences they had been through. One said simply that what they gained was “Peace”.

“For my information to attend these things it was healing because I did experience lot of things during the struggles I did see lot of bad things, people burning and things and I was involved on those things. Sometimes when you grow up things like these come up in your dreams and in your mind and some of them are very disturbing you imagine them each and every day and they cause confusion in my life so these programmes have helped me a lot..., it helped me to control my anger. I don’t interact with most of the people in my community most of the time I hang around with my comrades and we try new things I don’t like to sit and talk with people and that’s what worries me at the moment but I’m able to control my anger through the help of the programme and the things that I used to do during the struggle don’t bother me anymore.”

Another important psychological gain ex-combatants expressed was that of hope. This is illustrated in the following quote:

“...if I didn’t meet them – or either get counseling – maybe I don’t know where I would be, maybe I would be in jail, or maybe I am now a criminal or maybe I am not here in this world (dead). But they have played a bigger role to me, even today, I just say, some of the things I am able to motivate myself and say, let me – you understand. It doesn’t matter if I go to sleep without food or I don’t have alternative or anything. I console myself, telling my self that one day things will be right.”

c. Social gains

Although some of the above-mentioned gains are relevant in terms of social functioning others were also mentioned. Some ex-combatants spoke of meeting new people during the interventions with whom they are still in contact. They also said that due to the interventions they are now able to rely on others for help or support.

“This process...enabled me to be a team player. I do not trust anyone, nor do I like to rely on anyone, but I had to rely on someone because I realised that it helps to work as a team.”

Some referred to a change in how they perceived people from other military structures as a result of interacting with them in the interventions.

“...members belonging to other factions were fighting for the same thing in different ways”

d. Unfinished business

On a few occasions ex-combatants referred to the process as a beginning. Some described this by saying that they are still healing. One ex-combatant described this journey in the following way:

“...before you can see that things are going well, you are the one who need to be well first. So I am in the process of healing. As I am in the process of healing...I know that I will be well to my neighbor and another person. I can not say that I am 100% right or say that I can face life. I am still in the process, I am trying to face life and bring back my humanity and my manhood.”

Overall it would seem that ex-combatants have benefited in a variety of ways through their participation in the interventions. For some, these benefits have had a significant impact on their lives. Some concerns are also highlighted here. The issue of re-traumatisation seems to need special mention. The fact that a number of ex-combatants referred to their difficulty in containing the memories raised through the interventions requires further inquiry. Are the interventions doing enough to contain these processes and to support ex-combatants appropriately? The references made to the interventions being the beginning of a journey suggests a positive impact although not sufficient or complete.

7) **What was not helpful: “Everything...is still in the dark”**

Ex-combatants raised a number of concerns relating to the organisations; the content of the activities offered; the lack of post-activity support or follow-up; and unemployment as a main concern.

a. About the structure of the interventions

The weakness most mentioned of the interventions noted was linked to the lack of follow-up and post-intervention support as is illustrated in the following quote:

“These NGO’s train us and dump us with no work because they all speak the same language of soft skills.”

Some ex-combatants felt that the interventions were poorly organised.

“I’m still confused I don’t know what I’m doing...initially the programme was changed several times to an extent that I don’t have something to produce to say this is what I have

done because they are changing the programme now and then”

One ex-combatant described how the training he attended was conducted in English and that some participants did not understand what was being said but did not say anything to the organisation.

“...amongst us there are those who don’t understand English. These courses should not be done only in English because someone might sit in a corner and you might think they understand what’s going on. These courses need to be done in other languages like Xhosa, even if it’s done in English have someone to translate into Xhosa for those that don’t understand English. In the course that we did there were people that you could see did not understand what was going on, they were just continuing because they didn’t want to drop out but really not knowing what’s going on.”

b. About the organisations themselves

Ex-combatants expressed some mistrust for the motivation of the organisations. A few felt that they are there for their own purposes and not to assist them.

“Also you find that this people who are running the projects they are just people who is just there for money...They are not just there to help us, they are there just there because of their own purpose...”

One also felt that although the organisations teach them to forgive and forget the organisations themselves are unable to do so.

c. About the content

Ex-combatants felt that these interventions should have been done upon their return to the country not now. They said that they knew they were no longer in the military and felt that the interventions brought back hatred and bad memories. Some describe feeling that the interventions never helped totally, did not help with their emotions and that, as expressed in the heading of this section, *“Everything...is still dark”*.

d. Unemployment continues

Ex-combatants also discussed their disappointment once the interventions were over. They said that without a job counselling cannot work. This was echoed by a number of them adding that they and their families had hoped that after the training they would be able to find employment. The fact that this did not happen resulted in disappointment and anger.

“They promise to relieve...stress instead they cause you more, you get home and tell them (family) and they think you

were lying to them and then you're back to square one and like speaker no 1 said you regret having done the course because of all the conflict that arises at home. Your family supports you financially in the hope that once you finish the course you will also be able to contribute financially towards the well being of the family and when you come back with only a certificate there is a lot of conflict."

The emphasis on not finding employment after the training and its link to anger was described by this ex-combatant:

"I feel nothing helps despite being counseled because of hunger and hunger makes you feel angry as you are not working so I think if you are working it is much better. As the Zulu's idiom says 'hunger makes you angry'. When you are always hungry and someone comes to you, you automatically feel angry because you are hungry even if you want to start a business how can you do that because you don't have money to start business so that you can prosper"

Ex-combatants also felt unable to implement the skills they received once the intervention was over. One described how they are not respected in the community and therefore people would not approach them for help. They felt that the community would not come to them as they themselves were unemployed so therefore could not qualify for providing advice.

This section raises some tough questions for organisations working with ex-combatants. Important questions raised include: how well planned and structured are the activities; how much communication and engagement with ex-combatants is there when organisations plan their interventions; how appropriate are the interventions developed (in other words, are these interventions really addressing the needs)? It is, however, equally important to think about the extent to which ex-combatants responses to these questions are linked to their feelings of disempowerment and frustration with their situation.

8) Other problems not solved by the organisations

The greatest problem not to be solved by the interventions was financial difficulties. This was expressed as the need for money or housing. Others mentioned that their anger was not dealt with while some just stated that they *"Still need more help."*

Once again, the issue of economic disempowerment emerges strongly as a major need. This poses a challenge for organisations in terms of what their interventions should focus on (discussed in more detail in Chapter 4).

9) Is it still important for organisations to work with ex-combatants?

Almost all of the ex-combatants interviewed felt that organisations should continue to work with them. Some felt that organisations would need to change the way in which this happens. Suggestions that follow-up be added or that ex-combatants should direct the interventions themselves were made.

Those that said that it was important for organisations to continue working with ex-combatants gave several reasons: organisations still need to help them economically and socially; organisations have the capacity and resources to engage with “government” and that without these organisations they would not know a lot. The most supported reason however, was that “*comrades still need help*”. When asked to elaborate ex-combatants said that they still needed help with: parenting; bad memories; domestic violence; suicide; violence and past traumas such as torture and rape.

“The mind is full with things that are not right. The other day my friend said you can take the guerrilla out of the bush but you cannot take the bush out of a guerrilla. ...what happened during the apartheid years is still haunting us, it is part and parcel of our lives. ...and now we are giving birth to children, how are we going to raise those children because now we have mixed emotions inside ourselves.”

Ex-combatants are clearly able to recognise the benefits that organisations offer them as well as the unmet psychosocial needs amongst other ex-combatants. They also highlight the complexity involved in trying to address these needs and offer suggestions to organisations to include them in their planning as a way to improve services.

10)What are the most pressing challenges faced by ex-combatants? “No dignity”

For many of the respondents, basic needs for employment, housing, financial assistance, and access to health care were the most pressing challenges faced by ex-combatants. Psychological challenges were also recognised some of which were linked to the fact that their basic needs are not being met. Some felt that they also faced challenges posed by other people such as lack of support from the community and their leaders and that their contribution has not been recognised. One of the consequences of these challenges, which is of some concern, was that they feel that they have no other option but to turn to crime.

a. Basic needs

Ex-combatants felt strongly that their most pressing challenges are unemployment and lack of money. This was followed closely by lack of housing and access to health care. Some even refer to hunger as a pressing challenge. Ex-combatants linked their inability to find employment to their lack of skills and education.

“When you were in the struggle, holding a gun and jumping borders no one said you do not qualify, but when you need help, you are being told that you do not qualify. This is so painful.”

b. Psychological challenges

A number of ex-combatants mentioned various psychological challenges they still face, these include: suicide; trauma; depression and lack of hope; anger; alcohol abuse; relationship problems.

“I still need more help because a lot of things have happen some painful and some of them are scary especially when it becomes dark outside I feel scared and I if I have a problem at home I don't resolve it calmly I just shout at everybody especially when I'm drunk...It's a real problem...”

The following quote highlights the link between psychological challenges and the economic needs mentioned above, that many ex-combatants express.

“There was no one who was assisting me, even my friends,...But this thing end up eating you inside, at the end of the day you end up – where you want take a decision, say no, there is nothing that I am living for in this world. After fighting like that, is better if I just go (kill myself). Because of what? It doesn't help to always feel the pain of hunger, you understand...”

c. Challenges posed by external people

Ex-combatants described feeling that they are not supported. Many felt that one of their biggest challenges is the fact that they are not recognised or acknowledged.

“...we killed, seeing our brother getting killed, you see things like that, you see. We have sins because of those things, but there is nothing that they want – like: to wash us, so that we can be people who are recognized...We were in the front line. But all of us who were in the front line during the struggle we are now at the back there.”

Some paint a picture of being shunned by their communities; abandoned and excluded; oppressed and not respected.

“Comrade is truly in trouble, a lot of them are separated from their wives and girlfriend due to the fact that they are unemployed they don't even get respect from their children and their families. In some families you are told to go to your ANC and ask for money for bread.”

“They forget about us, we who used to say “we want Mandela, we want Mandela”. Today we are not wanted, even near him, you see that.”

“Now those Comrades they find themselves in the new South African as Hobos, you understand...that thing is painful...other people treat us like we were wrong to fight the Boers. Like for example today, the Boers, those former SADF, they have the cards, if that person is sick, he can be able to go to private clinics... But us, we call ourselves that we are freedom fighters, today we don't have those things.”

“...when you see that you have a problem, you have to go to field and pray alone, isn't it? But immediately you go there, there's one's that used to call you dirty, we are barking, we act like dogs. “Hou...hou...hou”. again when you go and do that thing, they say, here he, now it is democracy but he is going to his exile in the township. I can say that this things they don't stop (finish) because oppression is still there.”

A number of them feel that there is poor information given by the VA's and that the leadership “are looking after their own pockets” as is highlighted in this quote.

“we have different associations out there and they will say they need an ex-combatant to do a particular job...and those people have taken other peoples personal particulars and make money out it and those are the people that we regard as our leaders...We once went to attend and we didn't even get a certificate or nothing they gave us a one week allowance after that it was nothing and there are donors who contributed money for us to attend the courses.”

d. Consequences of these challenges

One concerning aspect to emerge from the discussions was participants' feelings that due to the overwhelming challenges they face their only option is to turn to crime. As can be seen in this quote some of the descriptions of possible criminal acts involve a high level of violence.

“I told them that in 2010 will come in June, I will be still not working, I still live the life that I am living. Expect that the tourist which they say they will send at...stadium that their dollars and euros I will rob them with a petrol bomb. And the one who don't want to do that, to cooperate to what I am telling him to do, I will burn him.”

It seems clear that ex-combatants still face a great number of challenges. This section seems to provide support for seeing this group as different to others and in need of targeted attention. The extent to which their basic

needs continue to be unmet is compounded by the psychological challenges they continuously face. In addition to this, their apparent frustration with those they perceive as being in a position to assist them and do not, results in a discourse of violence and threats. Although one should be cautious to assume that this discourse will result in actual violence, it is vital that this not be ignored. The question arises: what does it mean when ex-combatants speak so openly about the possibility of committing such violent acts?

**11)What constraints prevent ex-combatants from reaching their goals
“no one is looking after the welfare of our comrades”**

According to ex-combatants the reasons for them not achieving their goals are varied. Most placed the responsibility or cause of the constraints externally. The biggest one mentioned was the lack of access to jobs and money. Some explained that many ex-combatants are too old to be employed by “government” (who seek younger and fitter men and because they “had” to commit crime their criminal record prevents them from working for “government”) but too young to receive pension. They are therefore stuck in the middle.

A great deal of concern was raised in terms of the VA’s and problems amongst ex-combatants. They explained that there is poor information-giving from the VA’s and a feeling by many that these are only concerned with their own pockets.

“But what harm us is that you get wrong information from our leadership...Our leadership is looking for what? They are looking for their own pockets. We are sold by our leadership, not that you should be killed, no, they gain by you. That is what is destroying us, is our leadership.”

Some mentioned that opportunities for ex-combatants are not going to them and there is a great deal of mistrust and dishonesty amongst ex-combatants. Other constraints ex-combatants highlighted were: “government” not doing enough; no programmes to integrate them into their community; lack of education or qualifications; capitalism and empty promises.

It is interesting that ex-combatants feel that the reasons for them not achieving their goals are mostly external. On one hand, these could be valid constraints that if addressed could assist ex-combatants a great deal. On the other hand, it would seem that ex-combatants are reluctant to reflect on how they themselves may in some way impact on their ability to reach their goals. This poses an important question to organisations in terms of the extent to which they attempt to address these external constraints.

12) What interventions are needed for ex-combatants “...we just want our dignity to be restored”

Ex-combatants felt strongly that they should be given the opportunity to direct interventions themselves. They expressed the need for interventions that would provide opportunities for them to improve their economic situations as well as address their psychosocial needs. Some recommended the establishment of a Ministry of Veterans Affairs.

a. Opportunities to improve their economic situation

Participants felt strongly that they should be given financial support. For some this meant economic support to start their own businesses. They also felt that they needed access to training in hard skills for which they could find employment. Ex-combatants urged NGO's to build partnerships with the public and private sectors in order to create employment opportunities for ex-combatants. Some felt that they no longer want jobs that militarise them once again (e.g. SAPS and security industry) and other identified possible opportunities like tourist guides for 2010. They felt that they needed opportunities to prove themselves. The need for housing and food were also mentioned.

“Give us a chance to prove ourselves, give us money to go to school.”

“We are starving, we want houses and we need employment. I do not want to be buried like a pauper. We need to be given opportunities to prove that we have capabilities to do things for ourselves.”

Ex-combatants also link their ability to become financially stable to opportunities for education. Some identified computer skills while others wanted educational opportunities to be given to their children.

b. A Ministry of Veterans Affairs (with own Minister)

A number of ex-combatants thought that a Ministry dedicated solely to addressing the needs of ex-combatants should be established. This Ministry would assist with implementing interventions such as those mentioned above.

c. Psychosocial interventions

The need for counselling, research (into causes of suicide and crime involvement) and moral support were also mentioned.

“I think they should start by offering us counseling that is what is important if we get counseling maybe we can realize that we don't need to wait for special pensions and you know that you were under 35years in 1996 so you don't qualify obviously. People wait for special fund because he is not mentally liberated he is not yet independent so if he can get counseling we would go far.”

It was felt that NGO's also needed to extend their services into the townships as many ex-combatants cannot access their services. Some ex-combatants reflected on the difficult position they now find themselves in, whereby their own needs and the needs of others may clash.

"...we don't want anything from them and we are not saying we want to take people's jobs we just want our dignity to be restored we don't want to regret having joined the struggle. We fought so that resources can go out to those that need them we did not fight so that we can steal white people's cars. We must benefit from our struggle that's all we ask for from the government."

Ex-combatants have clear ideas of what is necessary to assist them. Their request for economic empowerment is, once again, highlighted as well as a call for more focused attention and resources through the establishment of a Ministry of Veterans Affairs. Ex-combatants also highlight the need for psychosocial interventions such as counselling. This could either be reflective of a real need for psychosocial interventions or, if one were to be more critical, could reflect what they have learnt from the organisations.

13)What ex-combatants still use today from the interventions

Ex-combatants reported feeling more confident now and not feeling so alone.

"...today I can say I have a friend that whenever I'm feeling down and lonely I would approach him and tell him how I feel...I think it is helping a lot because initially I...wouldn't go to somebody before and tell him that I appreciate your friendship it was difficult to do those things back then."

Some felt that the interventions created a basis for healing.

"I can say that intervention from [organizational name removed] has created basis for healing process although I cannot say at this point in time it has actually 100/% healed me but I can say there are basis of refocusing and putting my priorities into context."

Some said that they continue to use the following: mediation; anger management; and life skills.

"In confrontations I am able to walk away to calm myself down and come back and tell the person that I was not happy with the way they treated me instead of starting a fight."

Participants said that they felt more able to cope with their circumstances; they have stopped blaming; they have more positive thoughts and are able to advise others with similar problems.

“I’m able to advice some of my comrades who are experiencing the same problems that I went through. It doesn’t end with just comrades; I am able to use them in my family as well.”

Despite ex-combatants criticisms of the organisations and their interventions, it seems that in a number of ways they clearly continue to benefit from participating in those activities. The benefits are not extensive however, if compared to their aims and should be critically explored by organisations. In which ways are they having an effective impact and in which ways are they not?

14) Ideas for psychosocial interventions

Once again ex-combatants felt that psychosocial interventions are not sufficient. These need to be accompanied by interventions that will address their economic needs. Respondents also indicated that organisations needed to be cautious in their approach to resolving psychosocial issues. They felt that probing was problematic as it brought back memories they did not want to deal with.

a. Addressing other needs “Therapy is not enough”

Ex-combatants felt that in order for their psychosocial needs to be addressed they required assistance in resolving their economic difficulties. They suggested: skills development; education; employment; and assistance in being able to work with different people.

“...maybe these psycho issues should not be treated once. ...Rome was never built in a day. So you can not heal your mind that was built for many decades, overnight. I think that the therapy that we did it was good, but it was not enough.”

b. Types of interventions

Although the need for different types of interventions was mentioned and an emphasis placed on economic support ex-combatants do recognise the need for: therapy, support groups; and moral support. They do raise some concerns in relation to the way in which these types of interventions are done. They say that good listeners are required and a number of ex-combatants pointed to the dangers of probing as this may make things worse.

“...there is nothing that I gained from that programme...But it brought back the hatred and the bad memories of...the time I was in exile...”

“The (organisations) have a tendency to probe ex-coms about issues we are not prepared to divulge. We were

socialised to believe that one must not talk about certain things until one dies. These organisations must learn about this culture. Otherwise this probing brings certain memories to the ex-com....My criticism is that these organisations are too curious. They should know when to stop asking questions because opening wounds worsens matters for ex-coms.”

Here, ex-combatants clearly indicated that psychosocial interventions in isolation are insufficient to resolve their needs. Should organisations be exploring other forms of interventions or perhaps clarifying their aims and target group more effectively? The way in which they intervene and their impact needs to be (re-)evaluated. The issue of probing and re-traumatisation (already discussed above) is raised again by ex-combatants and clearly requires attention.

15) Government

Ex-combatants were asked about the role government has and should play in relation to ex-combatants as well as how they have attempted to engage with “government”. Although most ex-combatants could not identify any interventions for them offered by “government”, some were able to mention a few. Most of these were limited or surrounded by problems. Respondents felt that “government” should be addressing most of their basic needs; monitoring organisations providing services to ex-combatants and addressing corruption in relation to pensions. Numerous attempts to engage with “government” have been made but most have proven to be unsuccessful and have only resulted in empty promises. All ex-combatants said they were willing to talk to “government” and that it is the “governments” interest to engage with them.

a. What interventions have “government” done for ex-coms

Most ex-combatants said that they did not know of any interventions for ex-combatants offered by “government”. Some managed to mention a few such as:

- Paving training by the Johannesburg Roads Agency
- Reconciliation/reintegration programme in 1994/1995 by the SADF
- Safety and Security Sector Education Training Authority (SASSETA) offered skills training but only to ex-SADF
- Encouraged to join the Metro Police
- Metro bus/metro rail provided some help
- Sent to the hospitality sector

Participants felt that these interventions were riddled by difficulties. Some of their concerns included: nepotism, misuse of funds; ex-combatants not gaining access to opportunities; and being blocked by other ex-combatants.

“...there are people who are serving in government who are getting the special pension. It makes us wonder how this is possible, how can someone still serving in government qualify for special pension where us ex-combatant struggle to get it or don't get it at all. The last time I was in that meeting about the special pension where we were told that they will look into the whole issue of people who were under 35 when they came back in 94. You find that the person that is responsible for the special pension fund is your old comrade and there's nothing he doesn't know about you but he's your biggest stumbling block. This is why I say there are people in our own organizations who are set on destroying comrades for no reason.”

Other concerns related to opportunities not being in line with their own interests and rejection from some opportunities due to lack of education.

“Even if there are positions that require ex-combatants they prefer to recruit people who are not ex-combatants. Some of us are not educated enough...At the end of the day I don't meet the criteria that is required but practically I can do the job but cannot be hired because I don't have the qualification.”

b. What should “government” do “Bring back our humanity”

“Government”, according to ex-combatants, should be addressing a number of needs. Many of them are related to basic needs such as access to health care, housing, food, pensions, transport and jobs. Access to money, discounts at shops and training were also highlighted. They felt that “government” could also play a role in monitoring the organisations providing services to ex-combatants as well as address the corruption in relation to their pensions. They asked that “government” listen to them and “stop wasting money”. “Government” could also play a role in organising social gatherings and burying comrades that died abroad.

“I believe that ex-combatants need basic needs like everybody who resides in South-Africa and taking into consideration that their situation is different due to sacrifices that they made because a lot of them sacrificed their education to liberate this country so I still believe it is within the powers of the government to meet them half way in whatever they want to do.”

c. Attempts to talk to “government”

Various attempts have been made to enter into dialogue with “government”, mainly by the VA's. These attempts included: sending memorandums with demands; conferences; and proposal sending.

Various avenues have been tried: ANC Headquarters; Public Works; “Office of the MEC” (unclear which one); City of Johannesburg; Treasury; Department of Labour and Social Development.

When asked about the outcomes of these attempts, ex-combatants reported that either nothing happened or they were given empty promises.

“...we are constantly being told that they are looking into it but the government is doing nothing, we can’t run away from that. We are in 2007 and we were promised in 1994 and how old was I then, I will even die before anything happens.”

d. Willingness to talk to “government”

Ex-combatants said that they would be more than willing to engage with “government” on these issues and that “government” should be listening to them.

“Yes, and we are willing to speak to him and we will not stop because we want our lives to be better than now and soon we will be toy-toying and close down freeways maybe then he will take us seriously and he will realize that these guys need jobs, houses and skills and if we don’t do something serious we will always be counseled until we get old.”

“I think it should be the other way round; the government must be willing to listen to us as we are the core of this liberation.”

This section highlights the lack of knowledge of and access to interventions by “government” for ex-combatants. “Government” needs to clarify the following: are there interventions specifically aimed at ex-combatants; where are these and who is eligible; in which ways are they being monitored to ensure they reach ex-combatants fairly; what role can “government” play in assisting ex-combatants? The reported lack of “government” engagement with ex-combatants and their structures raises concerns around political will and interest in this group. Ex-combatants are willing to engage with “government”, which should be taken advantage of.

16) Gender Analysis

The research included a woman’s only group as a way of looking at differences or similarities to male ex-combatants and in order to give women a more prominent voice. Through the analysis however, it was found that the female participants did not produce categories (themes) that contrasted a great deal with what their male counterparts presented. There were a few themes that women did seem to focus on more than male ex-combatants. These warrant further investigation and include their concern about: the welfare of their children (including the impact that them being ex-combatants is having on their children and their own ability to parent effectively); other ex-combatants (female ex-combatants seemed to

express more concern over comrades needs and/or assisting their comrades than male ex-combatants); issues affecting women such as domestic violence and prostitution.

Interviews with organisational respondents

1) Information on the interventions offered

Organisational respondents were asked a number of questions regarding their interventions. Information was obtained regarding: the focus of their interventions (and how these may have changed over time); recruitment strategies; selection criteria; their main activities (where they discussed the content focus of these); the length of their activities; methods to ensure lasting impacts; and ways in which their activities have been monitored and evaluated.

a. Focus of interventions

This section explores the focus of each organisations activities when they first begun assisting ex-combatants and how this focus may or may not have changed over time.

Initially organisations tended to focus their interventions on issues related to reintegration and providing psychosocial support. This included assisting ex-combatants with: integration into their families, counselling, support groups, moving them away from a soldier mentality; group processes and reconciliation. Some organisations focused on: developing income generation opportunities and accessing people who qualified for the TRC.

All the organisations said that the focus of their interventions with ex-combatants has changed over time. The most cited reasons were that they have developed broader objectives (e.g. to include access to job opportunities) or have become more holistic. Other reasons included: seeing the need and coming into contact with other organisations and deciding to engage in combined projects. The following quote highlights the importance of combining different kind of projects:

“because the overall objective of the programme was to ensure that at the end of the day these people are able to find employment,...but at the same time taking into account the fact that they come from a background where I think on a personal level, or psychologically they were not particularly ok, so you also need to be able incorporate that element so that once they get into jobs, they are able to sustain those jobs, they are able then to relate with the other people. ...in the absence of this psychosocial component, the danger would be,... (that) the person is not yet ready to be able to get into that kind of a system, where you find that maybe in things like provocation the person might lash out, because the person has not being able to deal you know with the inner problems that either he or she experiences.”

Organisational members indicated how they have attempted to adjust their activities to better assist ex-combatants. This seems to indicate a willingness to learn and change and an interest in attempting to address the needs of ex-combatants effectively. The attempt of some organisations to address ex-combatants' economic empowerment needs and entering into partnership with other organisations could be indicative of the recognition of the limitations of their own interventions. The question remains as to whether these changes have been effectively thought out, planned and executed and whether they are merely reactionary?

b. Recruitment and selection criteria

Organisations have used different avenues to recruit ex-combatants into the activities they offer. Most recruitment was done through: the VA's; networks with other organisations; contacts made over time; word of mouth; rural outreach; and referrals.

When asked about selection criteria most organisational respondents said that they were very open as it could not be too restrictive. A number spoke about targeting the marginalised and disadvantaged ex-combatants. Other criteria included: ex-combatants that had suffered gross Human Rights violations during Apartheid; had been involved in combat; or want to be healed. One organisation did highlight that some activities are conducted in English although there are usually bi-lingual facilitators available making the ability to understand and communicate in English a possible selection criteria.

Although the organisations seem to value an open approach when it comes to selecting ex-combatants for their activities, it could be argued that this may have its own limitations. To what degree are the people who would most benefit from their interventions, actually being reached? Few make use of assessment during selection as a way to ensure that those who participate could really benefit. It would also seem that organisations rely on existing networks or contacts to recruit ex-combatants, but could this be to the exclusion of the most disempowered and isolated who they say they target?

c. Main activities

The activities offered to ex-combatants fell within four focus areas: psychological assistance; creating support systems; economic empowerment; and advocacy.

i. *Psychological assistance*

Some organisations offered interventions that sought to improve ex-combatants psychological well-being such as: individual counselling; telephonic crisis; body mapping⁸; massage therapy;

⁸ Body mapping is a technique whereby participants are asked to outline their own body on a large piece of paper and then colour different areas according to different emotions linked to those body parts.

story telling; psychological assessment; and personal support from other ex-combatants. Some offered interventions at a group level like group work; soft skills workshops; and self-development workshops.

ii. Creating support networks

Organisations engaged ex-combatants in resource mapping exercises and created referral networks of other service providers they could refer them to. General meetings with ex-combatants were also used. One of the benefits of group interventions mentioned was the support that ex-combatants provided to each other.

“...when we have these groups it’s like you re-establish that (camaraderie) because although they in the same areas they are not really communicating a lot with each other....the other thing that...came out of the group that was really, really heartening was the fact that they said...different groupings like the MK or APLA worked so well together in their fight against apartheid they used to share ammunition or share plans or...just have support for each other and in the last few years they’ve drifted apart and actually quite conflictual relationships. ...we grouped people from different background together and it help to repair that in away....So it was amazing to see people socializing after the workshops in the weekends and things like that... It really brought them together.”

iii. Economic empowerment

A few organisations have included income generation as part of their activities. Some have also joined with other partners that offer hard skills training to assist ex-combatants in becoming more employable. Internships for ex-combatants have also been one of the activities offered.

iv. Advocacy

Although not a main activity for most, advocacy has played a role in some organisations’ interventions. One example is advocating for access to reparations of those that were victims under Apartheid.

d. Content focus of interventions

Organisational respondents also described the content focus of their activities in some detail. These could be grouped under three main themes, namely: soft skills development; psychological healing; and group processes.

i. Soft skills development

Organisational respondents mentioned a number of soft skills that their interventions attempt to build these include: skills identification; developing plans of action; relaxation techniques; life skills;

communication skills; relationship skills; anger management; and resource mapping.

“...our role...(was) two fold, one, was to provide life skills,...and these life skills would obviously have specific topics...and the topics I think included...issues like self awareness,... communications skills, interpersonal relationship...skills, anger...management, trauma,... HIV and AIDS, and then I think drug addiction....The other component was just an open type of session where people will raise whatever issues that they have...”

ii. Psychological healing

When discussing the main focus of psychological healing work with ex-combatants, organisational respondents referred to similar themes such as dealing with issues of masculinity and trauma and its effects. Other focus areas mentioned included: exploring values; building trust; increasing self-esteem; restoring dignity; individual growth; emotional issues; substance abuse; HIV/AIDS; exploring life histories and how goals have changed. For many, psychological healing continues to be vital for South African ex-combatants.

“...there are so many ex-combatants that haven't moved on that are sort of stuck in a way,...that haven't grown”

iii. Group processes

Many organisational respondents placed importance on group processes in healing for ex-combatants. This translated into a focus on issues like reintegration; reconnecting ex-combatants to each other (even across different military structures); and sharing of traumas.

In describing their main activities and their content, organisational workers explain how their activities attempt to address the psychosocial needs of ex-combatants. They seem to have developed a number of interventions to this end. It is, however, unclear to what extent these activities are based on experiences of others or some kind of theoretical paradigm. Although, for some organisations theoretical engagement is not part of their approach, for those engaged in psychological assistance the lack of this may be problematic. Are these interventions based on previous knowledge and experience and if yes, in which ways? Furthermore, it would seem that a number of organisations depart from the assumption that ex-combatants are psychologically and/or socially impaired. Are they working from an impairment paradigm and if so why?

Organisational respondents show the way in which they have attempted to address needs that fall beyond what would traditionally be understood as psychosocial. Their engagement with economic empowerment initiatives and advocacy seem to fall in line with ex-

combatants needs. However, questions around this do need to be raised, such as: do they have sufficient expertise in this field to be involved in these (or if they bring on a partner, how experienced are they) and how effective have they been (do they result in real economic empowerment)?

e. Length of interventions

The length of interventions depended on the kind activities and objectives involved. Similarities did exist across organisations providing similar interventions. Most workshops offered to ex-combatants ran for 10-12 full days. Group sessions usually ran over a period of 12 sessions and individual counselling varied between 3 months to over a year (client dependant). Some organisational respondents said that their organisations offered support on a continuous basis.

f. Ensuring lasting impact

Not many of the organisations could elaborate on how their interventions attempt to ensure a lasting impact which raises some concern. For some organisational respondents this was done through an empowerment framework whereby ex-combatants are empowered with knowledge and skills to cope with things like their symptoms as well as what they can do for themselves. Others say that a lasting impact is achieved through providing some support after the intervention. For many organisations, ensuring lasting impact and monitoring and evaluation were confused.

g. Monitoring and Evaluating (M&E) their interventions

When asked about M&E most organisations recognised its importance. Their M&E activities could be divided into unstructured (informal); semi-structured and structured approaches.

i. *Unstructured (informal)*

Many interviewees described attempts at evaluating their activities informally. This included: receiving informal feedback from clients (the most mentioned example); conducting a verbal evaluation with participants after the workshop; and holding regular meetings with participants to check on how they are managing. The quote below highlights some of the limitations of these informal methods while at the same time pointing towards their benefits.

“The only kind of evaluation we did over the last...workshop was just a verbal one where we asked people how they felt they had changed. We were blown away. We were absolutely blown away. I know it’s a prejudice to be just standing there and getting a kind of feedback from people.... but there were negative aspects as well and they were very open about it, they were very honest.”

ii. *Semi-structured*

Most organisational respondents gave examples of semi-structured methods of monitoring and evaluating their interventions. One concern raised is that these activities are done on an ad hoc basis and sometimes not completed for analysis. The methods used here include: pre- and post-tests; record keeping during workshops; evaluating the workshops with partner organisations; self-evaluations; receiving supervision during group work; holding debriefing meetings; and using questionnaires occasionally.

iii. *Structured*

A few interviewees held the view that an external evaluator would be the preferable way of monitoring and evaluating their activities. They felt however that they did not have the money to do this. More structured evaluations (not monitoring) of activities did not occur commonly. Two examples were made, one involving an external evaluator who contacted past participants and another external evaluator who was sent by the donor agency.

iv. *Results of the M&E activities*

Most organisational respondents reported positive feedback from their M&E activities even though they recognise its limitations. Some positive outcomes reported included: ex-combatants reporting alleviation of symptoms; feeling better; becoming engaged in community activities; and improved relationships with their families and communities.

“People were just going on and on, one guy for instance said: “I can feel and I know that I have changed so much in myself” but he said, “It’s difficult now for my family and even my community to accept this new person that I am”...people said “my relationships have changed”, “my attitude to women have changed”, because we dealt with those, their roles in society and how that change... (it) was amazing what came out.”

Several of the organisations reported having used the feedback received from these evaluations to improve their interventions. This may have involved a change in focus, rearrangement of programme; or inclusion of aspects that were not covered sufficiently.

Organisational respondents were able to reflect on the shortcomings of their attempts to monitor and evaluate (M&E) their interventions. By in large there has been little to no serious evaluation of the interventions over the long term. Attempts to monitor and evaluate seem to have lacked planning and structure. The validity of the information they gathered is highly compromised by factors such as: asking for feedback immediately after the intervention; and having those who conducted the intervention ask the feedback (or even someone from

their organisation). This is, however not surprising, given the limited resources available, there is a tendency to recognise the importance of M&E but view is as something with less priority over project work. This needs to be seriously questioned and revisited. To what degree should interventions continue regardless of their impact?

2) Who is doing the work?

The organisations reported an average of 7 organisational respondents working with ex-combatants. This number varied between the organisations from 3 to 12. Some also mentioned a number of volunteers participating in the work. Most of these members had received some form of training and in the field of counselling. Some were psychologists and social workers while others had not received much formal training.

Although it is not clear as to who is doing what work (as this was not asked), it would be important to check what knowledge, experience and training people have in relation to their role in addressing the psychosocial needs of ex-combatants.

3) Main challenges of this kind of work

When asked to talk about some of the challenges they face in doing this work many discussed the personal, often negative, impact it has had on them. Organisational respondents also mentioned some challenges posed by ex-combatants during the activities as well as external/contextual challenges that impact on their work but over which they have little or no control.

a. Personal impact “sometimes (this work) is even quiet scary”

Organisational respondents spoke of the ways in which they have been affected by their work with ex-combatants. Some gave examples of being verbally abused by and being accused of using the ex-combatants they are trying to assist. The feeling of helplessness emerged several times with interviewees explaining that they feel powerless at seeing the amount of need, anger, volatility, trauma, and poverty experienced by ex-combatants. Something that increased their feeling of helplessness was seeing that some of the ex-combatants needs fall beyond their scope. Their limited access to funding also means that they are limited to the number of ex-combatants they can reach. For some, the impact of working with ex-combatants has been significant.

“We would welcome any ex-combatant who would want to be part of us but what they usually do is when they come they want to push us around and they want to demand and criticize some of them are very, very vocal and aggressive in how they present themselves, why am I not doing this and that...and that is partly why I become angered when I think sometimes what it has done to me, that is why I go to a therapist...”

“But sometimes (this work) is even quiet scary, you will even say my God what do I, why do I want (to work) in this sector. The sector, because you will be so hard and so strong that they feel used and you feel, you know, in your corner as an organization you are doing so much, you know, you have got such openness, and you know, to really reach them, but they really don’t understand that”

b. Challenges with ex-combatants during activities

Some interviewees felt that a challenge to their activities is that some ex-combatants: find it difficult to concentrate for long periods of time (linked to long stretches of unemployment); are abusing substances and often arrive at the organisation intoxicated; cannot separate the organisations from “government” and think that the organisations have a lot of money.

i. Contextual/external challenges

Some of the challenges faced by organisational respondents doing this kind of work are related to broader environmental or contextual factors. Aspects like the need for long-term or continuous support; need for ex-combatants’ basic needs to be met.

It is clear that for many organisational workers this work is particularly challenging. It would be important for ex-combatants and ex-combatant structures to acknowledge the work that they do and, for some the level of commitment they have. It would seem that the importance of acknowledgement and recognition expressed by ex-combatants could equally be given to organisational workers. This does raise concerns in relation to compassion fatigue⁹ and vicarious traumatisation¹⁰ and whether or not these are sufficiently addressed.

4) **Lessons learnt**

When asked about the lessons they have learnt doing this work, interviewees were able to reflect on lessons related to: work with ex-combatants in general; the “how to” work with ex-combatants; as well as ex-combatants themselves.

a. Working with ex-combatants

Those interviewed pointed to the importance of involving other organisations and “government” in the work with ex-combatants.

“...there’s another group that we worked with...for instance... their need was just to find out about the special pensions. And eventually what we had to do was to take one session we invited some people from government and said please come and answer all the questions because we cannot.”

⁹ Compassion fatigue refers to the emotional and physical stress the caregiver experiences when trying to help others overcome obstacles.

¹⁰ Vicarious Traumatisation is the cumulative effect experienced by those working directly or indirectly with survivors of trauma.

While some highlighted the importance of learning from other countries other highlighted the importance of learning from “non-professional” approaches. Interviewees felt that they further learnt that: reintegration of ex-combatants is very complex process; the “UN formula is unhealthy”

“Another learning would be the complexity of the tasks that face reintegration and there is almost like this United Nations formula, I have seen it in one of the Ivory Coast, you go in and you hand in your arms we burnt some arms and we put you in a camp there we, either you go into the military or we put you back into your community and here R500 and please go don’t come back to us. And that kind of process is what we have learnt is very unhealthy, and what it does is it sends somebody with a gun back into the community. Whether you burn the gun or not the guy is still got the gun and you are sending that person back into the community and you are saying fend for yourself and telling the community a lesson saying please don’t fight for liberation because it doesn’t get you anywhere.”

Other lessons included that work with communities, not only individuals is necessary; recognition is important; and an understanding of the dynamics within the sector is necessary.

b. “How to” work with ex-combatants

In relation to how one should approach work with ex-combatants, interviewees learnt that one needs to: be flexible; start where the client is despite your own objectives; be patient; be parental; and that one should treat all ex-combatants equally.

“...you can go with your psychotherapy ideals and your what not but you get there and the client is in a different space completely and you need to change your thoughts. You need to be able to bend with the wind kind of thing... and yet achieve at the end of the day what you want so that it becomes the major challenge”

c. About ex-combatants

The lessons learnt about ex-combatants were that many are in need of long-term counselling; they can cause instability; and that they mistrust the organisations motives.

Upon reflecting on the lessons they have learnt through their work with ex-combatants, organisational respondents’ answers seem to reflect an underlying tiredness and disempowerment. If one takes into consideration the issue of compassion fatigue (highlighted above) this response could be understood. Their answers seem to lack the sophistication that could be

expected of people with their experience and knowledge, which is of concern.

5) Plans for future work

All the interviewees said that their organisations had plans to continue working with ex-combatants in the future. Most said that their future plans would seek to increase and/or expand their current activities and some discussed their ideas for future activities.

a. Expansion

Expansion of current activities involved: holding more workshops; expanding services to rural areas; looking at long-term programmes; building on and expanding existing networks within the sector; including ex-SADF members; increasing the number of ex-combatants that go through their activities; working more with families including second-generation trauma.

b. Focus of future work

In the future, several organisational respondents emphasised capacity building and empowerment based approaches. Some felt that the individual counselling and work around issues such as masculinity should continue into the future while others spoke of attempting to tap into economic empowerment opportunities for ex-combatants such as the tourism industry and 2010 soccer world cup.

Clearly, for all the organisational respondents interviewed, work with ex-combatants is vital. In actual fact many would like to expand their current activities and include other focus areas. It would be valuable to question these decisions in a way that will ensure more effective impact.

6) Why is it important to work with ex-combatants *“what kind of country forgets about the people who fight for liberation”*

According to organisational respondents, ex-combatants' need for healing and recognition and the danger they pose to society are the main reasons for why continued work with them is important.

a. Ex-combatants still require assistance to heal “They have not healed”

A concern raised by the respondents was around the DDR process not being done properly and as a result many ex-combatants were not given the opportunity to heal. A number of organisational respondents spoke about the concern that many ex-combatants have not yet healed. One respondent highlighted the experiences of many ex-combatants that have not yet been attended to in the following quote:

“...most of these people went away for so many years when they were young, and while they were away all kinds of things happened,...remember these are groups of people who went to foreign countries, unfamiliar environments, different culture, having to be subjected to rigorous training, some of them might have been involved in combat activities

and some of their comrades have died...and some of the comrades witnessed the kind of punishment that was meted by the leadership in an event that somebody was suspected of being a spy. Or while you are away, at home maybe your parent dies, you get a message, you can't give a space to grieve because you are a soldier, in other words, you have got to put this on hold until maybe freedom is attained..."

A number of those interviewed highlighted the high levels of alienation from communities that ex-combatants experience.

"...when they came back...people look at them as an entity, or look at them differently, and they also struggle to move away from a mode of being a soldier because it gives them power and status, and in the process then they get alienated from their own communities. Communities look at them as these people and us – these people and civilians. And in a sense...it creates a problem in terms of these people having to integrate into their communities."

Associated with this, is family pressure placed on them as explained by one interviewee.

"Some of them obviously have a lot of pressure because of the expectations their own families have, that firstly 'you left without informing us so I'm still angry with you about that. You made us suffer; the police came here and harassed us because of you. And number two, we thought while you were away you were working so hard, you were doing something so that when you come back, you can be able to take care of the family, and we are still taking care of (you)'."

b. Concerns regarding the danger they may pose "...unguarded missiles that are waiting to be ignited."

One of the main reasons mentioned by those interviewed in relation to why it was important to work with ex-combatants related to the danger they may pose.

"(Ex-combatants feel that) 'they owe me something because I went out and fought for them.' And this is a group that, I think if there are no interventions to be able to help them, they could be sitting as unguarded missiles that are waiting to be ignited, which could bring instability in the country."

This danger was linked to their engagement in domestic violence; their abusive approach and their involvement in crime. Most interviewees acknowledged that this was directly related to how ex-combatants have been treated and the lack of recognition they have received.

“that’s the most difficult because we find people who are ex-combatant(s) are very, very abusive but mostly because that is how they have been treated all their lives as combatants they were not treated as people who had initiative, who could do things for themselves...”

c. The need for recognition

A number of those interviewed highlighted the need for ex-combatants to be recognised. This was not only in relation to their contribution and their sacrifices but also in terms of the skills that they possess and their ability to contribute.

Once again, many organisations assume that ex-combatants are psychosocially impaired. To what degree is this in fact the case? Should their fears regarding the danger ex-combatants pose be true, what should they be doing in relation to this? Are their interventions sufficient to prevent the “*unguarded missiles*” from being “*ignited*”?

7) Most pressing challenges facing ex-combatants

According to organisational workers the most pressing challenges facing ex-combatants are lack of skills; lack of recognition and their isolation.

a. Lack of skills

The most mentioned challenge facing ex-combatants identified by organisational respondents was the lack of skills. Linked to this was the lack of recognition of skills that they do possess.

b. Lack of recognition

Many interviewees felt that another major challenge faced by ex-combatants is the fact that they have not received appropriate recognition for what they have contributed to the country and the sacrifices this entailed. This lack of recognition is also then linked to alienation from their communities (another major challenge) and a sense that their dignity has not yet been restored.

“Well I think recognition of the contribution made is key. In a certain way, like with the wall in Pretoria, that’s important, like with the peace plaque that’s happening there, constitutional hill or what does that mean if you cant take your family, if you are an ex-combatant and you want to take your family to Robben Island, where are you going to get R1000 to take your family. For me that’s a key challenge because it helps people to make sense at a psychological levels of the experiences that they went through and it helps in a certain level validate those experiences so it becomes easier to cope with the aftermath of that experience because you have got some self worth around that.”

c. Isolation

Many felt that ex-combatants are isolated and find themselves with poor support especially from “government”, which was described as ignoring ex-combatants.

These challenges provide some explanation as to why organisational members report a change in their plans for future work with ex-combatants. This seems to demonstrate an understanding of ex-combatants situation and needs.

8) Constraints preventing ex-combatants from achieving their goals

Both internal and external factors were identified that prevent ex-combatants achieving their goals. Psychological obstacles make it more difficult for ex-combatants to be able to reach their goals. Some constraints related to those in the ex-combatants’ environment such as “government”, stakeholders, and military structures were described.

a. Psychological obstacles

Most of the interviewees identified a variety of psychosocial concerns that they believe are the main constraints to ex-combatants and their goals. These included: not being healed; them being stuck in self-destructive cycles; poor self-images; poor relationship skills; inability to set personal goals and plans to achieve these; not acknowledging that they are wounded; anger; PTSD; and not seeing opportunities. A number of organisational respondents felt that these psychosocial issues often result in ex-combatants’ inability to sustain jobs they do manage to find.

“...in fact they themselves first need to deal with issues and about acknowledging that you are wounded.... for them to say ‘I was severely damaged in the process and I need help’ that’s incredibly important first step.”

b. External factors

Constraints that fell beyond ex-combatants control were also identified by those interviewed. A few thought that the division between the different military structures was an obstacle as well as a lack of support from the structures. Lack of organisation of the sector was also mentioned along with: lack of opportunities from “government”; different stakeholders viewing ex-combatants as the sole responsibility of the Department of Defence; and the patriarchal nature of our society.

In contrast to ex-combatants, organisational respondents identified both internal and external factors that could be preventing ex-combatants from reaching their goals (ex-combatants focused on external factors). But, what impact does this difference in focus have on the interventions done with ex-combatants and where do they tend to locate their interventions? Do they aim at reducing the internal or external constraints through their interventions?

9) What interventions are needed

When asked what interventions were needed for ex-combatants there was a great deal of agreement between organisational respondents. The most mentioned interventions were related to economic empowerment; followed by activities geared towards recognition; then psychosocial assistance; and finally support in strengthening the sector.

a. Economic empowerment

The need for interventions that seek to economically empower ex-combatants is clearly prioritised by the organisations interviewed. For these, the following suggestions could be pursued: skills training; getting successful ex-combatants to share their experiences and knowledge; reparations; pensions; financial boosts to start businesses; job creation; and linking their skills to the business world (strategic thinking).

“The sense of self worth is related to if you can generate income and if you can generate income then you can integrate into the community.”

b. Recognition

Recognition was felt to be an important part of the interventions needed for ex-combatants. These could involve: a parade; media exposure; reparations; a monument; and creating a popular national history of their role.

“The validation is very important. You see what’s happening now is I had a recent conversation with...former combatants, friends of mine and the one guy was saying you know the shame of being a former combatant today, and he was saying that one of the things if he died in the struggle you would’ve had more honour now...That’s the seriousness of what we are talking about.”

c. Psychosocial support

Counselling was identified by a few interviewees as an important intervention. Psychosocial interventions also included community reintegration and a continuation of existing interventions by service providers. It was felt that these interventions need to be empowerment driven.

d. Support to strengthen the sector

In order for the needs of ex-combatants to be met it was agreed that the sector needs to be strengthened and in this way ex-combatants would have more power to ensure improved access to services. In order for this to occur long-term support is required. Other suggestions included ex-combatants being given a platform at “government” level and help desk run by them.

“...they’re a little bit silenced, no one is talking about them, they just been forgotten. But there could be a space, where they could talk about this and will even say that some special projects are just for them and make them...get into those projects that will help them...I don’t see the platform for ex-combatants anywhere.”

Organisational workers recognise the importance of economic empowerment for ex-combatants. But for them, addressing these may fall beyond their ability or resources. They could feel helpless as they may not have the resources (finances or knowledge) available to meet this need even though they know it is important. They may then find themselves in a difficult situation of offering what they can. Given the interventions they mention here, organisations may need to ask themselves if the interventions they are offering are useful for the majority of ex-combatants or if they need to be far more selective. This is not an easy decision as organisational workers are aware of the great need and the lack of interest in addressing these.

10) Government

As with the ex-combatants, organisational respondents were also asked about the role “government” has and should play in relation to ex-combatants. They also described how they have attempted to engage with “government”, the results of these attempts and their willingness to do so.

a. “Government” projects for ex-combatants

Most of the organisations initially said that they knew of no programmes developed by “government” for ex-combatants or that there have not been many. Those that did know of some mentioned the following:

- A TRC desk run by the Justice Department in Cape Town
- A fund for ex-combatants run by Frank Chikane
- Three day skills training offered by the Ekurhuleni municipality
- Training offered by Safety and Security Sector Education Training Authority (SASSETA)

Many interviewees felt that “government” did not understand the difficulties ex-combatants face and have also not engaged with them on this issue.

b. What “government” should be doing

According to organisational respondents “government” has an important role to play in addressing needs of ex-combatants through: provision of counselling; skills training; housing; job creation; education opportunities; skills recognition; work with families; and supporting organisations doing this work with resources.

Interviewees also felt that “government” should play a role in addressing the injustices of the past; addressing the poor management

of pensions; formalising effective healing approaches and replacing ex-combatants place in the history of South Africa.

“I would say that there are a lot of people in government who understand it very clearly they are ex-combatants themselves....I want to hear implementation. Our government is very good at policy, we have got very good policies, but very bad (at implementation), we know that as a nation. I mean I could see coming out of this research that government could take 10 years to form policy, then a white paper would be issued and then some government department would be told form a cluster with the ministry of defense around this issue. What we need is an implementation plan.”

Suggestions that “government” should also engage in partnerships with organisations already working in the field; create a Directorate of Military Veterans as well as train their staff on how to best assist ex-combatants were also made.

c. Attempts to talk to “government”

Organisations have made several attempts to engage “government” in dialogue in relation to ex-combatants. They reported that nothing has ever come of this and one even felt that “government” “*shuts organisations out*”. Attempts to engage with “government” have been through the following:

- Local “government”
- Ministry of Defence
- Social Development
- Labour Department
- Municipal offices

d. Willingness to talk to “government”

All organisational respondents said that their organisations are very willing to engage with and enter into partnerships with “government”.

As with ex-combatants, organisational workers had very little information on what interventions “government” has developed for ex-combatants. They agree that “government” has an important role to play and that they are eager to engage with them. By engaging with these organisations, “government” will gain a greater understanding of the challenges facing ex-combatants and how these could be addressed in a way that contributes to the country.

CHAPTER 4 – DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS - CROSS CUTTING THEMES/GENERAL THEMES

This chapter outlines cross cutting and general themes to emerge from the analysis made in the previous chapter. The major themes are discussed under the following headings:

- Political will
- Strengthening the sector: Platforms for consultation and discussion
- Economic Empowerment
- Psychosocial Healing
- Recognition

Each theme/category is accompanied by recommendations to relevant stakeholders such as: government departments; ex-combatants; veterans associations; and organisations working with ex-combatants.

There are a number of general recommendations that apply to all sections and to all stakeholders in general, namely:

- To increase their level of engagement with each other. It is only through consultation (from project idea phase and throughout) with all involved that interventions can begin to be empowerment driven. In all aspects of work with ex-combatants, finding different options for intervention and how these could be implemented should be done through providing opportunities for all to give real input.
- Ex-combatants should begin to be viewed as individuals who have the potential to contribute a great deal to society if given the opportunity and support to do so.

1) Political Responsibility/Will

Government in general and relevant government departments in specific (such as the Department of Defence; Department of Social Development; Department of Labour; Department of Health and the Department of Education) need to recognise the importance of assisting ex-combatants and develop the political will to do so. Both ex-combatants and organisational members highlight this as a key factor influencing the healing of ex-combatants. While “government” seems reluctant to engage in this, the importance of their engagement should be made clear and understood. Both organisations and VA’s should be more assertive in their attempts to engage “government” and to increase political will and responsibility. This could be done through increased media exposure where ex-combatants can tell their stories. Engaging high profile programmes such as 3rd Degree; Carte Blanche or First Assignment to highlight the needs of ex-combatants could be one strategy. Another may be to have a regular column in one of the leading newspapers or to hold a very public conference where ex-combatants can share their stories. The organisation of a peaceful march by ex-combatants could make their issues more visible to the public and “government”.

Both ex-combatants and organisational members highlighted that psychosocial difficulties, when combined with economic disempowerment, have the potential to result in violence and be de-stabilising. Indeed, if we consider that these ex-combatants were trained to fight an unjust system some concern may emerge if they begin to perceive the current system in the same light. This should be something that “government” take heed of.

At the same time, “government” should recognise the potential that ex-combatants have to contribute to the country. These are individuals who made sacrifices in order for democracy to be achieved. They have a strong interest in seeing that this is maintained and that everyone benefits from this. “Government” should see assisting ex-combatants as an opportunity with potentially great benefits.

Recommendations

To organisations

- Allocate resources towards lobbying and advocacy with the aim of increasing political will or responsibility on the part of “government”. This could be linked to ensuring that the “Advisory Board on Military Veterans Affairs” and the “Office for Military Veterans’ Affairs” are established and fulfil their mandate as set out in the Military Veterans’ Affairs Bill (1999) as well as ensuring that relevant government departments (discussed below) begin to engage in assisting ex-combatants
- Develop strategies to achieve this in collaboration with VA’s
- Advocate and lobby for government resources to be allocated to the CSO providing interventions to ex-combatants

To Ex-combatants and VA’s

- Discuss different avenues for increasing “government” will and responsibility towards ex-combatants (e.g. the use of petitions; media campaigns or non-violent marches)

To Department of Defence

- Ensure the establishment and effectiveness of the “Advisory Board on Military Veterans Affairs” and the “Office for Military Veterans’ Affairs” as set out in the Military Veterans’ Affairs Bill (hereafter referred to as the “Act”) of 1999. Both these structures should be communicating clearly and engaging with VA’s and CSO’s in addressing the needs of ex-combatants. The Act outlines the powers and duties of these two structures which are clearly central to the sector. Some key components include:
 - reviewing, developing and co-ordinating policy regarding military veterans’ affairs;
 - reporting to the Minister on the monitoring of the execution of approved military veterans’ policies by State departments and provincial executive authorities, and the rendering of inputs for required corrective action;
 - researching, defining, investigating, evaluating and promoting military veterans’ affairs on an integrated basis;

- identifying legislative or administrative disparities, inequalities or unfair discrimination regarding the entitlements and the needs of military veterans and their dependants in order to rectify such disparities, inequalities or unfair discrimination;
 - reviewing existing legislation with a view to making new policy and promoting a consolidation of such legislation in order to provide for an integrated regulation of affairs of military veterans and their dependants;
 - formulating development programmes and submit proposals and recommendations to the relevant State departments and provincial executive authorities in connection with the development of military veterans' affairs;
 - consulting the Department of Defence, and other State departments and provincial executive authorities, and all other persons, organisations or institutions that are concerned with military veterans' affairs, to achieve the objects of this Act;
 - conducting a survey of State-controlled and privately administered schemes or programmes dealing with any aspect of the affairs of military veterans;
 - collecting data and information regarding all existing entitlements of military veterans and their dependants, and establishing a database on military veterans and military veterans' affairs, which must be updated regularly;
 - forwarding proposals or recommendations in connection with any aspect of affairs relating to military veterans and their dependants to the Minister or the Advisory Board, or any other person or body, for purposes of obtaining advice, guidance, direction or endorsement;
 - making inputs, through the Department of Defence, in respect of policy and budgets of State and provincial administrations relating to military veterans' affairs;
 - negotiating with State departments, provincial executive authorities and non-governmental organisations to act as agents for the Department of Defence to carry out duties regarding military veterans
- Engage with the sector with interest and commitment to learning more about what should and could be done to assist ex-combatants
 - The Department of Defence should be the coordinating body which should actively involve other departments in providing assistance to ex-combatants. Different "arms" of government have greater reach than CSO's and uniquely placed in communities to provide care to ex-combatants. The CSO's could be consulted and used to provide capacity building to different government personnel that would be responsible for this assistance

To the Department of Social Development (DoSD)

- The DoSD has a role to play in terms of provision of psychosocial support to ex-combatants and/or their families. This could take the form of greater awareness of some of the psychosocial difficulties ex-combatants may present with and how this could be best addressed.

To the Department of Labour

- Look at possibilities of including ex-combatants within their quota system (other countries have used this strategy as a way to assist with the reintegration of ex-combatants).

To the Department of Education

- The fast-tracking of recognition of prior learning of ex-combatants could be the responsibility of the Department of Education,
- Develop possibilities for ex-combatants to continue/complete their education.

To the Department of Health

- Survey the health status of ex-combatants
- Create opportunities for increased/facilitated access to health services for ex-combatants

2) Strengthening the sector: Platforms for consultation and discussion

A major concern to emerge from this research is the lack of platforms for consultation and discussion between all the stakeholders. Most organisations work independently from each other, with the exception of Cape Town where a network of service providers has been established. The communication between organisations as well as between organisations and ex-combatants or VA's seems to be limited with little consultation occurring. When asked about engagement with "government", both ex-combatants and organisational members say there has been little to none. It would seem that both have made several attempts to engage with "government" at different levels but with no result. The main complaints have been that "government" has made "*empty promises*" or have not responded. All parties expressed an interest in engaging with "government".

The question arises, how can the psychosocial needs of ex-combatants be successfully addressed if there is little to no opportunities for sharing of experiences, views and resources? The division of the sector is not surprising. Most VA's are linked to the military structures that existed before democracy and there are very few successful initiatives that bring ex-combatants from different structures together. This may be linked to unresolved ideological differences and to continued connection between structures and political affiliation. It has been a challenge for ex-combatants to move away from this and recognise the benefits that may emerge from one, integrated VA. Organisations, to some degree are also confronted with issues of competition for funding and territorial game playing. The type of interventions they offer as well as their geographical targets also contributed towards little communication and exchange. Limited funding also becomes an obstacle to effective networking. "Government" is constantly confronted by having to address the needs of various groups making it difficult to engage with all.

Although, the divisions and largely isolated patterns that characterise this sector are understandable, a stronger sector would bring benefits to all involved. The establishment of a platform where organisational workers, ex-combatants and/or their structures and (later) “government” could come together could be powerful. If ex-combatants were able to establish a more unified group they would be in a much better position to lobby and advocate for their needs. This would, however require a great deal of resources, support and political will and is likely to be a long-term task. Total integration between all ex-combatants may not be necessary. If a platform (working group/committee) were created around specific goals (such as psychosocial healing or economic empowerment) which included representatives from all VA’s and relevant organisations, it could be effective.

One obstacle facing this sector seems to be the lack of a clear database of ex-combatants. This is linked to the hotly debated question of who is and who is not an ex-combatant. This poses several difficulties as the number of ex-combatants remains unclear. There are several possibilities when looking at how this issue can be dealt with. Firstly, the sector could decide that this is not something that needs to be addressed in order for interventions to occur. Certainly for some NGO’s their services are open to other people and as such it is not central that those that benefit be ex-combatants specifically. On the other hand, when we begin to look at access to other benefits like opportunities for training; education; social support; and employment this becomes more central. A second option could be for a platform to be established that will begin to develop possible criteria for inclusion. This would need to involve the structures and one of their tasks could be to look at how “military veterans” are defined in South African law. It may be necessary to challenge some of the definitions put forward by “government”. The main aim, however, would be for the sector to assist “government” in the difficult task of resolving this issue which will directly influence the database of veterans that the “Act” requires to be established.

The members on the above mentioned platforms would need to have the backing of the VA’s, organisations or government departments they represent and have some degree of power to make decisions and carry actions forward. In addition, organisations addressing psychosocial needs of ex-combatants could benefit a great deal as they could engage with each other as well as with ex-combatants and/or their structures. Interaction between organisational workers could also mean more support for each other, which may affect compassion fatigue and burn-out. Exchanges with ex-combatants could also result in organisations addressing needs more appropriately.

Finally, agreement between the VA’s and organisations could place these two in a more powerful position to engage with “government”. Obviously, this will not necessarily translate into action by “government”. Ideally “government” would be represented on such a platform, but given their lack of engagement with the sector thus far, this is unlikely to occur

immediately. “Government” would benefit a great deal in engaging with such a committee as they will bring experience and knowledge as to how “government” could intervene effectively.

Although a number of obstacles exist in creating platform(s) of this kind, it is clear that the difficulties confronting this sector will continue for many years. The different stakeholders would all benefit from working together and it will also increase the likelihood that the interventions developed will be more effective. All those involved should look at how they could assist in making these platforms a reality. The cost of continuing without this interaction will be greater in the long run.

Recommendations

To organisations

- a. Short-term (1 – 6 months):
 - Begin to discuss the possibility of their participation in creating a platform internally. This will influence their planning in terms of work plans, funding requests and resource allocation
 - Engage with other stakeholders around planning for such a platform (including implications in terms of resources required)
- b. Medium-term (6 months – 1 year):
 - Submit funding proposals that cover the costs for development of the platform
 - Continue to engage with different stakeholders
 - Begin to engage “government” to participate in this platform
- c. Long-term (1 – 2 years):
 - Commit resources (human and financial) to the platform
 - Use it to inform interventions with ex-combatants (through partnerships or independently, depending on the needs)
 - Target “government” as a platform to participate through strategically targeted invitations and meetings. These attempts may need to be persistent and occur at different levels of government

To Ex-combatants and VA’s

- a. Short-term (1 – 6 months):
 - Begin to discuss the possibility of the VA's participation in creating a platform with their executive
 - Engage with other stakeholders around planning for such a platform (including implications in terms of resources required)
- b. Medium-term (6 months – 1 year):
 - Work with organisations to inform funding proposals that cover the costs for development of the platform
 - Continue to engage with different stakeholders
 - Begin to engage “government” to participate in this platform

- c. Long-term (1 – 2 years):
 - Commit resources (human and financial) to the platform

To “government”

- a. Short-term (1 – 6 months):
 - Allow opportunities for engagement with stakeholders and the information they have gathered about the situation of ex-combatants (e.g. research)
 - Begin to discuss the possibility of their participation in creating this platform internally. This will influence their planning in terms of work plans, funding requests and resource allocation
- b. Medium-term (6 months – 1 year):
 - Commit to participate on the forum
 - Continue to engage with different stakeholders
 - Ensure resource allocation to this platform
- c. Long-term (1 – 2 years):
 - Participate on the forum and give inputs
 - Commit resources (human and financial) to the platform

3) Economic Empowerment

One of the most striking elements to emerge throughout the discussions with both ex-combatants and organisational members was the emphasis on the need for economic empowerment for this group. It is clearly one of the main challenges faced by ex-combatants in South Africa today.

The relationship between economic empowerment and psychosocial healing is in some ways complex. There are significant differences in the way that organisations and ex-combatants view this relationship. As portrayed in Diagram 1 (below), for many ex-combatants only once they are economically empowered can psychosocial healing occur. Many even suggest that their psychosocial problems only exist because they are economically disempowered. For organisational members, on the other hand, this is seen in the reverse. In other words, in order for ex-combatants to be economically empowered, psychosocial healing needs to occur. For them, ex-combatants’ unaddressed psychosocial needs often result in their inability to access or maintain economic opportunities (e.g. jobs). Organisational members also express a concern that should economic empowerment be obtained, the psychosocial needs would still remain and could then interfere with ex-combatants ability to maintain their status. This understanding, although for some ex-combatants may hold true, raises a number of questions. Firstly, on what is this assumption based? In other words, how true is it that psychosocial difficulties are the main obstacles to ex-combatants’ economic empowerment? Secondly, to what degree does this apply to the majority of ex-combatants that approach the organisations?

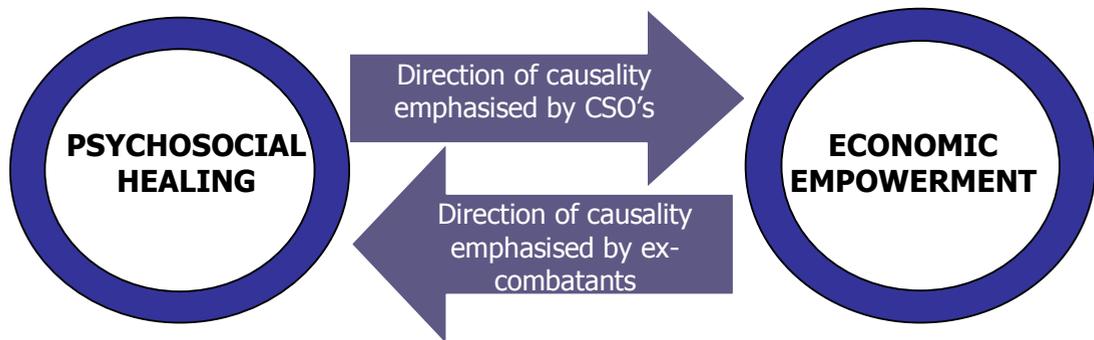


Diagram 1: Emphasis placed on psychosocial healing vs. economic empowerment

For ex-combatants, however, the need for economic empowerment, understandably takes precedence. While for organisational members, whose knowledge and experience lie with psychosocial healing, this is where emphasis is placed. This thinking may, in turn, be flawed. For some ex-combatants it may be that their psychosocial well-being plays a role in their levels of economic empowerment. So for these, economic empowerment may not resolve their psychosocial difficulties.

There is no doubt that both are important and the relationship between the two is complex. Psychosocial difficulties can be compounded by economic circumstances (for example, economic empowerment is seen as a protective factor against trauma exposure and reactions) and an individual's psychosocial state can have an influence on his/her ability to be economically empowered. To a degree, it may very well be true that some psychosocial healing can be obtained through economic empowerment. The same is true of the opposite, a more psychosocially stable person is more likely to be able to access and maintain opportunities for economic empowerment. The question is: can these two be dealt with separately or independently from each other? From the discussions captured in chapter 3 it would seem that both ex-combatants and organisational members feel that they cannot.

Both ex-combatants and organisational members recognise the importance of addressing both needs. Ex-combatants highlight an array of psychosocial difficulties they continue to face and see these as obstacles to achieving their goals as well as what interventions need to target. Organisational members identify the lack of economic empowerment as a key factor in psychosocial healing for ex-combatants and have tried to address this in some way.

Organisational members have mentioned various attempts to address economic needs of ex-combatants. This has mostly been done through income generating activities (IGA's) or in attempts to collaborate with partners who provide workplace skills training. However, a number of questions emerge from these attempts, such as: to what degree have they been successful; how much planning and investigation was involved; and how experienced and successful were those who implemented them? Failure of these attempts has a number of negative consequences for

those involved. Firstly, a great deal of time and resources (including donor money) could be wasted. Secondly, the impact on the ex-combatants' psychosocial states (including their sense of hope and levels of empowerment) can be negative. Thirdly, it increases the levels of frustration of organisational workers who focus on psychosocial healing. Lastly, continued failure of these contributes to a negative relationship between ex-combatants and organisational workers as this fuels feelings of mistrust and frustration.

If it is accepted that both psychosocial healing and economic empowerment are key for the healing of ex-combatants within this context, how best can this be achieved? Achieving economic empowerment, like psychosocial healing is a complex task and needs to be approached as such. Empowering someone with the skills and knowledge to do this on their own is even more complex. It requires elaborate, well planned models with input from people with experience in the field (refer to the section on intervention development below). Organisations need to ask themselves if they should be engaging in these activities at all. If it is agreed that it is necessary in order to achieve their objectives of psychosocial healing, then this would have a number of implications for them.

It is clear, from the discussions that if organisations want to continue working with ex-combatants, issues of economic empowerment cannot be ignored. To continue with a focus exclusively on psychosocial interventions has been recognised as being insufficient. Organisational members may argue that this is not their area of expertise and continue to focus exclusively on psychosocial interventions. The difficulty for organisational members however, is that they are often the only ones attempting to assist this group and this raises some ethical challenges. It would seem that organisations have a number of options available to them (which are not mutually exclusive) when confronting the issue of economic empowerment, namely they could:

- a. Continue to focus exclusively on psychosocial interventions but would then need to narrow their target group and become more selective in their recruitment so as to ensure that those that go through their interventions are the most likely to benefit. From what organisational members and ex-combatants have said, this approach may be problematic as it does not fully address their needs and may in some ways be counter-productive.
- b. Develop interventions aimed at economic empowerment that are accompanied by psychosocial support. Organisations would need to develop the expertise within their organisation or through partnerships to ensure success of such interventions. Any training would need to be based on a sound labour market audit so as to ensure that ex-combatants receive training in a skill that is needed. Ideally agreements with "government" or the private sector will ensure employment opportunities once training is completed. Also, organisations should conduct a cost-benefit or return-on-investment analysis of these interventions

so as to know how many rands/hour ex-combatants earn through these interventions. As a result, more resources would need to be invested in economic empowerment interventions that have a good chance of success. This may feel threatening to organisations as it would divert funding from other activities and falls beyond existing workers' knowledge and experience (and comfort zones).

- c. Along with ex-combatants, engage in lobbying and advocacy with "government" and the private sector to assist with economic empowerment of ex-combatants. This would also require an investment in terms of funding and time, but could be a good compromise. Here, organisations can continue to focus on their areas of expertise while advocating for economic needs to be addressed by those who are better placed to do so.

Ex-combatants also have an important role to play here. Although they seem to communicate their need for economic empowerment to organisations, they continue to participate in psychosocial interventions that they may not need or want, due to perceived or hoped benefits this may bring. As a result, ex-combatants that are in real need for such psychosocial support are less able to access it. Ex-combatants, their structures and organisations should be very clear about the objectives of the interventions being offered as well as who the intended beneficiaries are. They should work with organisations to advocate, lobby and negotiate for their economic needs to be met.

"Government" could play an important role in contributing to the economic empowerment of ex-combatants. Indeed, they could facilitate interactions with the private business sector to this end. They could also work closely with organisations to develop programmes that will address both economic empowerment and psychosocial support. Most ex-combatants are not seeking hand-outs but rather an opportunity to work towards improving their economic situation. This should be encouraged and supported. "government" should also seek to fast-track the recognition of prior learning for this group.

All role players: ex-combatants, VA's, "government" and organisations should come together to develop an effective economic empowerment strategy for ex-combatants.

Recommendations

To organisations

- Make decisions regarding their engagement with activities aimed at the economic empowerment of ex-combatants. A suggestion could be to combine option a) and c) (above) whereby organisations continue to focus on their areas of expertise while at the same time lobby and advocate for economic empowerment opportunities to be created by "government" and the private sector. Any intervention(s) need to be accompanied by monitoring and evaluating processes

To Ex-combatants and VA's

- Lobby "government" and private business to enter into partnership with them and psychosocial organisations, in order to address the economic difficulties faced by ex-combatants
- Attempt to access opportunities for ex-combatants to become more economically empowered.

To "government"

- Enter into partnerships with organisations and VA's to develop opportunities for the economic empowerment of ex-combatants
- Ensure that the special pensions are being handled correctly and reaching the intended recipients
- Encourage private business to develop opportunities for ex-combatants
- Fast track the recognition of prior learning for this group, including the recognition of skills obtained through military training.

Private business

- Acknowledge the role that ex-combatants have played in making it possible for business to prosper in South Africa by developing opportunities for economic empowerment specifically aimed at them. This should be done in partnership with organisations that can ensure psychosocial support.

4) Psychosocial Healing

The continued need for psychosocial healing for ex-combatants is recognised by both ex-combatants and organisational members. It is clear that a number of ex-combatants continue to express several psychosocial difficulties that need to be addressed. As this research was not an impact study of the various interventions offered to ex-combatants in South Africa, it is difficult to offer concrete suggestions for interventions. More exploration needs to be done in order to begin developing specific, appropriate interventions. The psychosocial states of ex-combatants and the interventions developed to address these are influenced by a number of factors as can be seen in diagram 2 below.

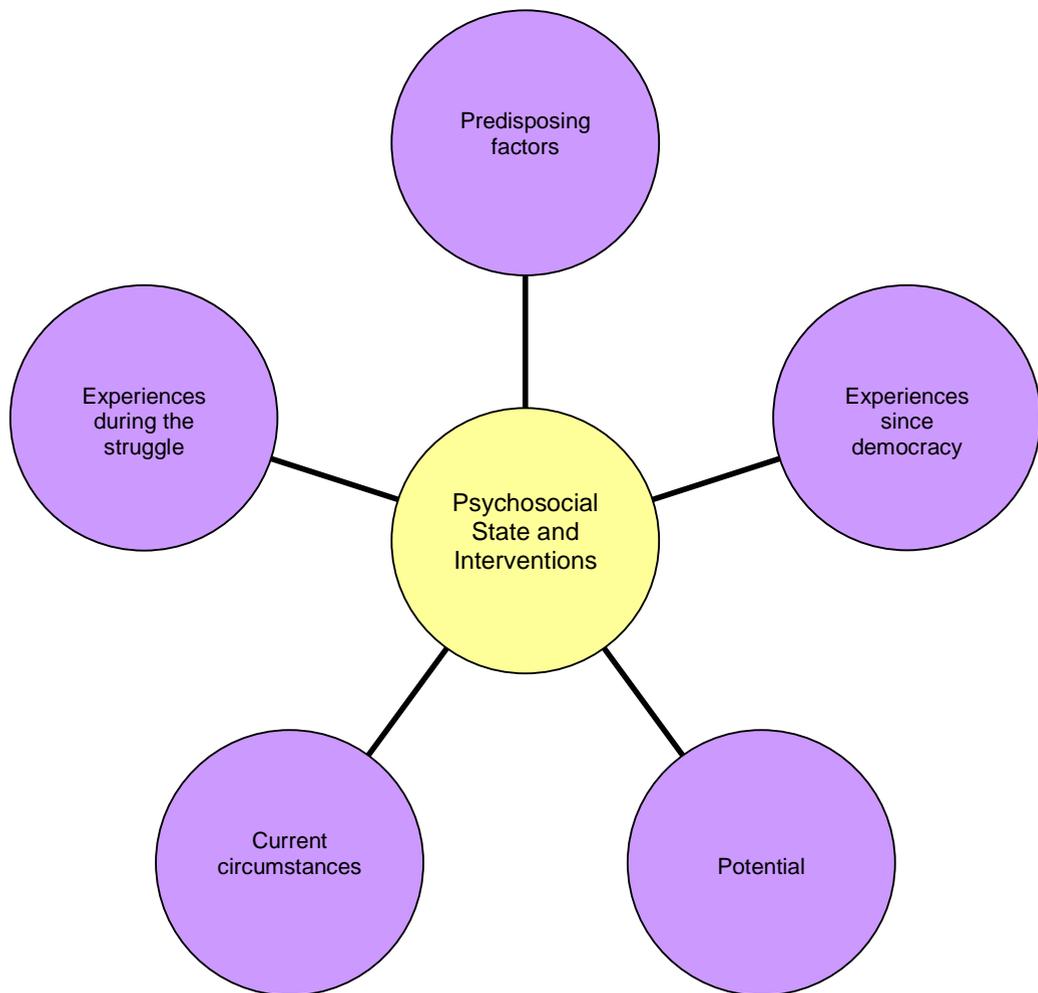


Diagram 2: Factors influencing ex-combatants psychosocial states and interventions

Both ex-combatants and organisational members seem to have a good grasp on what psychosocial difficulties face ex-combatants and greatly agree on these. For ex-combatants these include: suicide; trauma; depression; lack of hope; anger; alcohol abuse; and relationship problems. Organisational members, identify similar psychosocial difficulties which include: unresolved trauma, issues of masculinity; poor self-esteem; difficulties with trust; substance abuse; anger; relationship difficulties; and communication difficulties. For ex-combatants however, psychosocial healing cannot occur without economic empowerment (discussed above under “economic empowerment”). For them, these two factors are strongly linked. Although most organisations acknowledge this link, their interventions, to a large degree, focus on addressing psychosocial needs. This difference has implications for the success of interventions. The psychosocial healing of ex-combatants is a complex task and may vary from ex-combatant to ex-combatant.

South African organisations, have by now, gained a great deal of experience in the development of psychosocial interventions with this group. Many have been doing this work for several years and have, undoubtedly learnt a great deal. Unfortunately, this experience and knowledge has not been captured and shared. Due to the nature of developmental work in South Africa, few organisational members have opportunities to write about and/or research these interventions. A great deal is lost and as a result the development of new interventions is based on experiential knowledge rather than concrete results. The contextual differences faced by both ex-combatants and organisational members does mean that interventions developed and researched in other contexts may not be suited for South Africa. However, these could provide a basis upon which to start. These interventions, which are usually tested and based on many years of experience in work with ex-combatants, could inform interventions here with the aim of adjusting them to suit the context. The knowledge and experience of organisational members could be used to “fine tune” existing interventions.

A concern to emerge from this research is the seemingly lack of engagement with or clarity of the theoretical framework that informs psychosocial interventions with ex-combatants. When dealing with psychosocial interventions, a theoretical framework is important and could facilitate the development of these. Although this may, initially demand more time from organisational workers, in the long run it could work to the advantage of all involved. Linked to this, are the underlying assumptions that some organisational members hold. From the discussions, it would seem that there is an underlying assumption that ex-combatants, in general, are psychosocially impaired. This needs to be challenged. What is this assumption based on? What are the implications on interventions if this is the underlying assumption? How would interventions change, for example, if the assumption were that most ex-combatants are actually psychosocially healthy?

So what should psychosocial interventions with South African ex-combatants look like? This has no easy answer. But, it is clear that the current methods of interventions need to be reviewed. Organisational members need to seek to amalgamate their years of experience with current, researched knowledge in interaction with ex-combatants to best inform their interventions. Due to limitations, organisations do not necessarily need to aim towards “best practice” but should most certainly be moving towards “good practice”. In other words, there are minimum standards that should be upheld. These will depend on the intervention required as well as the objectives. “Good practice” can be achieved in a number of ways: researching current interventions (which includes monitoring and evaluation); expanding knowledge of the field (through reading and professional development); developing a theoretical framework; and engaging with others in similar contexts. Organisational members also have an important role to play in sharing their knowledge and experience with others in similar contexts. Once again, when thinking of psychosocial healing for South African ex-combatants, the need for

economic empowerment cannot be ignored. Organisational members need to think about what implications this has for their work.

For ex-combatants, an increased awareness of the impact of psychosocial difficulties is needed. Ex-combatants and VA's should gain more understanding about the activities offered by organisations as well as whom they are targeted at. There may be certain ex-combatants which are currently in great need of psychosocial support. These should be identified and linked to the relevant organisations. VA's also have an important role to play, along with organisations, to lobby "government" to address the psychosocial needs of ex-combatants.

"Government" has a central role to play in terms of addressing the psychosocial needs of ex-combatants. This is a need that will continue to exist as long as South Africa has a Defence Force. "Government" can play a major role in terms of reaching more ex-combatants in need of assistance. The existing structures, such as public hospitals and Social Development offices could easily be used as a way to assist more ex-combatants. "Government" could rely on the organisations in the sector for content expertise (developed through interaction with research, experience and discussions with ex-combatants) in this area. "Government" should support organisations to build the capacity of relevant Departments to assist ex-combatants as well as increase their capacity to provide specialist care.

Recommendations

To organisations

- Review existing interventions in terms of effectiveness through systematic monitoring and evaluating processes established during project conceptualisation that are not solely reliant on self-report measures
- Continue to provide interventions aimed at psychosocial healing of ex-combatants in collaboration with ex-combatants themselves
- Seek ways in which to address the economic empowerment of this group
- Research, document, monitor and evaluate interventions. This will benefit future interventions and could also assist others in similar contexts
- Engage in professional development by learning about what interventions have been developed for this group and how these may be adapted to the South African context
- Develop a clear theoretical framework that will inform interventions
- Challenge the assumptions held about ex-combatants
- Engage with other organisations doing similar work in the development of a South African-based model
- Engage in research on issues of unresolved trauma; issues of masculinity; poor self-esteem; difficulties with trust; substance abuse; anger; relationship difficulties; and communication difficulties as these relate to South African ex-combatants. Increased knowledge and understanding of these will facilitate intervention development

To Ex-combatants and VA's

- Invite organisations to increase knowledge around the psychosocial challenges ex-combatants could be facing and how they could be assisted. In turn, ex-combatants and their structures have an important role to play in terms of increasing organisational members' understandings of the needs of their members
- Also obtain more information about the activities offered by different organisations as well as who they are targeted towards
- Ensure that ex-combatants in need of psychosocial support gain access to services that are available

To "government"

- "Government" should engage with organisations to develop a suitable programme for ex-combatants that will assist them to successfully reintegrate
- Increase the capacity of social workers and hospital staff to identify and support ex-combatants with specific psychosocial needs through training by experienced organisations
- Support organisations conducting this work through resources and acknowledgement

Training institutions and Universities

- Courses for professionals who may one day have to assist with the psychosocial needs of ex-combatants (e.g. social workers; psychologists; and psychiatrists) should include information on their specific needs. This could include content on the long-term impact of combat on ex-combatants and civilians as well as appropriate interventions

5) Recognition

A major theme to emerge throughout the analysis of the interviews with organisational members and ex-combatants was the need for recognition. Both feel that not enough has been done to recognise the important role ex-combatants have played in the history of South Africa. Many feel that this lack of recognition continues to affect ex-combatants today and that this recognition will facilitate the psychosocial healing of this group. Although ex-combatants place emphasis on economic recognition, both highlight the psychosocial benefits of social and political recognition. Many ex-combatants enjoyed social and political respect during the struggle. Stories of the economic promises made once they returned home are common amongst exiles. However, once democracy was achieved, this seemed to disappear which has resulted in feelings of anger, disappointment and resentment.

Although recognition through opportunities for economic empowerment is complex, social and political recognition could more easily be achieved. This would need to occur through consultation with all stakeholders but is something that does not necessarily require a great deal of resources and

could be achieved relatively quickly. “Government”, organisations and VA’s should discuss opportunities for recognition. An example of a suggestion made by a respondent was to allow free access to monuments and museums (e.g. Robben Island) for ex-combatants.

Of course once the concept of recognition is discussed, a tension between individual and group recognition emerges. Although group recognition may be easier to achieve, individual recognition raises the question of who is and who is not eligible and once again points towards the importance of a database (discussed above).

Recommendations

To organisations and ex-combatants and VA’s

- Agree on ways in which acknowledgment could be obtained for ex-combatants
- Lobby and advocate for this with “government”

To “government”

- Consult with ex-combatants about ways in which all can be acknowledged for their role in achieving democracy. This acknowledgement could include political or social acknowledgement and/or economic acknowledgement
- Work on the development of an effective database system of ex-combatants (in conjunction with the VA’s)

6) Development of interventions

The information gathered in this research raised some concerns in relation to the way in which interventions are developed. Organisations in South Africa are faced with many challenges such as limited resources which often affect the quality of interventions developed. Many organisations seem to do what they can, given the challenges. Key steps to consider when developing interventions are discussed here and organisational members are encouraged to reflect on some of the ways they could improve on their intervention development within their context. For many organisational members, the information presented here is not new and could therefore serve more of a revision and possible guide.

a. Consultation

Many interventions emerge as a response to current needs and are informed by previous experiences of organisational members. This experience may also, to some degree be influenced by knowledge they have gained through contact with other similar interventions or research. Often, organisations’ limited resources means that only a few people are involved in the development of project ideas and proposals. In some instances these may be done in haste in order to adhere to proposal deadlines. More often than not interventions build on what has been done before and seemed to have worked. The lack of effective monitoring and evaluation of interventions raises concerns regarding this approach.

Organisational respondents spoke of adopting an empowerment driven approach to their interventions. For this to be truly accomplished, organisational members would need to consult with those who they wish to intervene with at the idea development stage. In other words, ex-combatants would need to be consulted before interventions are decided upon. This exchange of ideas and input increases the feeling of ownership on behalf of the target group and is empowering as they are able to contribute. An intervention that emerges from consultation between ex-combatants and organisational members with experience and knowledge is more likely to address needs effectively. This could also result in more understanding of what needs are most pressing and need to be addressed. This will allow for more focussed interventions to be developed. This kind of consultation could happen through a forum or through meetings with key role-players. Care should be taken to select appropriate people for consultation. For interventions to be truly empowerment based, however, ex-combatants should be employed by the organisation to do this work or even be represented on their Board of Directors.

b. Establishing theoretical underpinnings

Although organisational respondents were not asked directly about the theoretical underpinnings of their interventions with ex-combatants, nowhere did they make mention of these. When attempting to address psychosocial needs of any group an understanding of the theoretical basis of interventions and the research available on the subject is necessary. Although the South African context may pose unique challenges, a great deal can be learnt from the experiences of others. A good theoretical basis, which is informed by research, increases the chances that the intervention will be more successful. In consultation with ex-combatants, interventions can be adapted to this context. The establishment of a theoretical framework also need not require a great deal of time or resources. Of course, it would mean that organisational members engage with material (journals, articles, books, and conference papers) as well as colleagues (from other organisations) on the subject and spend time developing their own framework. Interventions that are thought out in terms of sound theory could also look more attractive to donors.

c. Design of interventions

Once consultation has resulted in decisions around what the focus of the intervention should be and organisational members are clear about their theoretical framework, designing interventions is facilitated. Decisions around the content of interventions will be informed by the organisational members' theoretical framework, the inputs given by ex-combatants as well as the financial resources available for the intervention. A balance will often need to be found between these. Issues such as language, literacy and educational levels of the target group are important considerations to have when designing interventions. Factors to be considered here include:

- o Objectives of the intervention

- Theoretical framework
 - Characteristics of the target group
 - Resources available
 - Time limitations
 - Organisational capacity
 - Ensuring lasting impact (support and follow-up)
- d. Training organisational members
 All too often, within this context, people with insufficient experience and knowledge are involved in the implementation of interventions. In order for an intervention to be successful, those implementing it need to have the necessary knowledge and skills. When looking at psychosocial healing, for example, having a facilitator that is unable to contain emotions or does not have a good understanding of the dynamics of such a group is highly problematic. In a way, it sets the intervention up for failure. More resources and time should be allocated to this aspect of intervention development if these are to be more effective.
- e. Selection of a target group
 Once interventions have been developed it is vital that the correct people be included. If an intervention is developed to target a specific need then those with that specific need should be included. In some instances, assessments should be conducted to ensure this occurs. Attention to language and literacy levels required is key. The more time and care spent on target group selection, the greater the chances that the intervention will be successful.
- f. Planning and organisation
 Any intervention should be well planned and organised. Planning logistical requirements (e.g. venues and materials needed) beforehand will allow more focus on the process during implementation. It also communicates respect for participants.
- g. Monitoring and evaluation
 All interventions should incorporate monitoring and evaluation. It is vital that this take place so as to ensure that something is learnt from the interventions and it is also a way in which organisations can record what they are doing. This could assist others in similar contexts. Monitoring and evaluation seems to be perceived as something that is overwhelming and requiring a great deal of resources. This is not necessarily true. Interventions could incorporate simple measures to monitor and evaluate their interventions. Assistance should be sought from people with experience in this to ensure that what is implemented is in fact useful. Organisational members could expand their knowledge in this aspect of developmental work.

It is clear that there are many who continue to be interested in assisting ex-combatants. Although more information needs to be captured and shared, a wealth of knowledge and experience in the psychosocial needs and care of South African ex-combatants exists. South African ex-combatants also hold a

great deal of insight and constructive ideas when it comes to addressing their needs. More consultation and collaborative lobbying could have many positive results for this sector. It is clear that ex-combatants have a great deal to contribute to society if they are provided with the opportunities to do so.

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