

Submission to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission: Survivors' Perceptions of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Suggestions for the Final Report

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Compiled by:

The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation
& the Khulumani Support Group

This submission to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is based on 11 reconciliation and rehabilitation workshops undertaken by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation between 7 August 1997 and 1 February 1998.

Authors: Brandon Hamber, Traggy Maepa, Tlhoki Mofokeng and Hugo van der Merwe – Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation.

Contributors: Sipiwe Masuku, Dineo Moloko, Sylvia Dlomo-Jele, Ntombi Mosikare, Maggie Friedman, Polly Dewhirst, Chrissie Hart and over 500 Khulumani members.

Introduction

This report is a culmination of eleven workshops that were conducted by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVr) with a sample of victims/survivors who belong to the Khulumani Victim Support Group. The aim of the workshops was to elicit the views of victims/survivors¹ on the recommendations to be made by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in its final report.

The report firstly, outlines the methodology of the workshops and their content. Secondly, the report summarises the views of the workshop participants with regard to the TRC and finally a list of recommendations and suggestions are provided.

Methodology

The workshops were conducted in formally black residential areas with a balance between the rural and urban areas. Areas where high levels of conflict had occurred were generally chosen. This conflict could have been inter-organisational conflict, state repression or situations where the so-called 'third force' was the dominant factor. In all instances, conflict was broadly political in nature. The communities covered were from four provinces, namely the North West, Mpumalanga, Gauteng and the Northern Province.²

Workshops were conducted in the following areas:

Area	Date	Attendance
Vaal Sebokeng	17/18/1997	49
Jane Furse (Sekhukhune)	14/08/1997	51
Burgesfort	20/08/1997	47
East Rand	28/08/1997	46
Klerksdorp	10/09/1997	51
Ermelo	15/10/1997	37
Tigane	21/10/1997	56
Pietersburg (Ga-Matlala)	24/10/1997	98
Nelspruit	27/01/1998	110
Khulumani Steering Committee	01/02/1998	15
Total Participants		560

As can be seen from the table above, 560 victims/survivors participated in the eleven workshops. The target constituency was mainly victims/survivors and family members of victims of gross violations of human rights, although in some instances individual community organisations did send representatives. There were more women participants than males in all workshops, the ratio being about five to one. The duration of each workshop was about seven hours and carried out of the period of one day. Each workshop had a standard format.

The views expressed in the workshops were then collated and written into draft form. These were then discussed with CSVR staff and were further fleshed out through various discussions with members of the Khulumani Victim Support Group. A small group discussion was held with selected members of the Khulumani Victim Support Group to help shape the final draft of the report. CSVR staff, with input from some Khulumani members, then finalised the report.

Limitations of this Report

- This report does not claim to represent the views of all victims of gross violations of human rights in South Africa. It is a selection of victim/survivors in only four provinces. Experiences in other provinces may have been qualitatively different. In addition, it probably expresses more the views of those who have had interaction with the TRC in one way or another, i.e. those who have submitted a statement and/or testified at the public hearings or being exposed to the TRC through the Khulumani Victim Support Group. It is therefore likely that the views expressed here, in fact, represent those of relatively more informed and politicised victims/survivors. Thus, it is likely that if victims/survivors express confusion about the TRC process in this report, that such confusions may even be heightened in other areas.
- It is also acknowledged that the recommendations and views expressed would also have been influenced by the final drafting of the report. This was a difficult task as an enormous amount of diverse information and a multitude of views had to be shaped into a coherent form.
- It was also found that many of the victims/survivors would readily indicate what they felt were the problems with South Africa's reconciliation process and the TRC, but did not always make concrete suggestions as to how these could be addressed. Where appropriate in these instances the final authors of the document tried to draw the criticisms of victims/survivors into constructive suggestions or recommendations.
- It also needs to be understood that the views expressed by victims/survivors in this report are their own personal perceptions of the situation as it affects them. Often TRC staff, or even the staff of the CSVR for that matter, may feel that the TRC has addressed certain issues that the victims/survivors raise in the report. However, even in instances where this may be the case, it is important to acknowledge that the perceptions and experiences of individuals are important and should be addressed.

The Workshops

Eleven workshops were run by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation. The workshops had the following objectives:

- To elicit input and views from victims/survivors regarding their current thinking pertaining to reparations and rehabilitations.

- To reach out to people who submitted statements to the TRC, particularly those for whom the CSVr had conducted TRC Education Workshops with in 1996/1997.³ The workshops presented here were follow-up session aimed to mainly broaden the debate and discussion about the TRC reparations policy in order to make proposals and to intervene where necessary at the local level.
- To make a submission to the TRC that would inform the final draft of the TRC Reparations and Rehabilitations Policy and the TRC final report.

The content of the workshops was shaped in such a manner that participants could interact in various ways. This included group discussions, plenary discussions, video material, the use of flip charts and open debates.

The main issues discussed were the views of participants pertaining to:

- The impact of the TRC on reconciliation in the participants' local region, i.e. village or township.
- Reconciliation initiatives prior to, during and after the TRC hearings.
- Feelings and views on the proposed interim reparations and its impact thus far.
- Input on the TRC current thinking with regards to reparations.
- Proposals for recommendations for the TRC final report and the way forward.

Findings and Survivors' Views of the TRC

The workshops revealed many different perspectives and views on the TRC. The following section summarises some of the views of victims/survivors and what they felt were some of the issues that will need to be addressed in the TRC final report.

Their views are summarised under four sections, namely: Reconciliation, Institutional Transformation, Symbolic Reparations and Material Assistance.

Reconciliation

This section of the report discusses the reconciliatory impact of the TRC as perceived by the participants in the workshops. It raises the issues which victims/survivors in the workshops feel still need to be addressed by the TRC or through its final report with regard to reconciliation.

Victims views on reconciliation

Reconciliation meant different things to the different individuals and groups across the localities. Although different individuals expressed mixed feelings about the concept of reconciliation, various perceptions could be categorised⁴ in the following ways:

- **Truth as a pre-condition to Reconciliation:** Victims in this category feel that they need to know the truth in order for reconciliation to take place, i.e. perpetrators should come forward to tell how and why they committed certain acts. They feel that they cannot forgive people who do not come forward. From this perspective reconciliation was largely conditional on truth-telling and the perpetrators being honest. Nonetheless, it was also apparent for these individuals that they generally saw the

processes of truth telling and breaking the culture of silence as the beginning of a more complex reconciliation process.

- **Justice equals Reconciliation:** Participants in this group felt that even if perpetrators were held accountable through the amnesty process for their deeds, justice still had to be done. There were strong feelings expressed that perpetrators must be made to contribute materially and financially toward the reparation and rehabilitation of victims. Justice and punishment was still favoured as a way of dealing with the perpetrators over amnesty.
- **Reconciliation is an Individual Process:** Some victims/survivors also saw reconciliation as a deeply personal experience and that each and every case must be dealt with individually. Perpetrators must therefore be held accountable individually and be accessible to the victims to meet them.
- **Reconciliation tied-up with Reparation:** A sentiment expressed by most victims/survivors was that reconciliation and reparation were integrally linked. The slogan "No Reconciliation without Reparation" was echoed in many ways throughout the workshops.

Problems with the TRC reconciliation process

The victims/survivors expressed a number of concerns and frustrations with the TRC and its work to date.

- Overcoming divisions of the past

Although each community had its own particular dynamics, most participants felt that the TRC process had not overcome the divisions that were created by the past conflict at the community level. There was a strong view throughout the workshops that the TRC had been more successful at the national than the local level. It became apparent that the work of the Commission had not always sufficiently permeated local communities and the TRC had not always dealt with inter and intra-community conflict. In many instances it was noted that the TRC may have begun a process in communities but this was far from finished.

Similarly, race was seen as an issue that was perpetuating division and an area that was not completely addressed through the TRC. The audiences of the workshops often spoke of 'whites' as not willing to reconcile or being absent from the reconciliation process. As one participant remarked:

White people do not want to reconcile with blacks since they do not turn up to the TRC meetings.⁵

The absence of white people both at the hearings and from many other TRC related activities was viewed by many as indicating a lack of interest on their part. The perception came across that blacks and whites are still living in separate worlds. This perception is based on the belief by many victims that white people are, by and large, the main perpetrators of violations by virtue of being beneficiaries of the apartheid system.

- Lack of follow-up of perpetrators

The role of the police and local perpetrators is still viewed with scepticism by those in the workshops. People felt that some of the policemen and women who committed atrocities against them were still holding positions of power in the government and police services; this was troubling to most survivors. There was a perception that despite victims having named perpetrators in their statements, the Commission has done little to follow-up on these accusations. One participant captured the voice of many when she commented:

The TRC have not helped with anything here in Duduza. My son was shot. A boy of 15 years – shot with 4 bullets by a policeman. Last year when I went to the police to inquire I was told that the case ended on the 5th of February 1996. The policeman is still working here ...⁶

- Dealing with perpetrators

The role of perpetrators in the process was also seen as hampering reconciliation and perpetuating existing divisions. The TRC process was largely considered by the victims/survivors in the workshops as weighted towards the perpetrators. There was a perception that perpetrators have been rewarded by the system and are still benefiting from the rewards (e.g. pensions, amnesty, etc.) and that victims are still suffering from the effects of apartheid. The TRC was also often seen as lenient toward perpetrators. The TRC was perceived by some to be trying to overly incorporate perpetrators and pull them into the process by routinely requesting them to come forward, rather than forcing them to appear before the TRC through court action or alternative steps. As one participant explained:

Perpetrators are not seen. The government is always begging perpetrators. A lot still needs to be done on the issue of forgiveness.⁷

Others saw this – perhaps more fairly – as a problem with the perpetrators rather than with the TRC. Some of these views were captured in the statement:

Most perpetrators do not indicate any sign of remorse and are therefore not serious about reconciliation.⁸

- Meeting the perpetrators

Some of the participants also wanted to meet with their perpetrators. They felt that the Commission had done very little in this regard as there is no comprehensive victim/offender mediation programmes in place to give victims a chance to interface with perpetrators. They were also of the opinion that the TRC did not do enough to encourage or even coerce most of the perpetrators to come forward.⁹ As one victim said:

We want (to meet) those Boers. The people were just sitting and the Boers entered and shot them. Those were Boers who did not even work for the government. They are still around.¹⁰

Many participants felt that the TRC has only raised the hopes and aspirations of the people but that tangible results have not emerged; meeting the perpetrator according to the participants was one way this could have occurred.

- Outreach Programme of the TRC

On many occasions the Commission's outreach programme was labelled as flawed and inadequate. For example, people indicated that the TRC had hired town councillors (or previous town councillors) to take statements. Victims felt that these individuals did not have a deep interest in the TRC process. Victims/survivors felt that NGOs and CBOs who were in touch with the victims/survivors should have been educating and telling people about the TRC to a greater degree. They felt that the greater use of NGOs and CBOs could have made the commission much more accessible to its target constituencies. Victims/survivors were equally critical that in many cases the TRC had not come back to the communities after the hearings.

- Amnesty

Victims/survivors felt that there was not sufficient space for victims in the amnesty process. Some of the participants felt that the Commission did not always consult them during the Amnesty process and that, at worst, they were left out of the process altogether. Some individuals raised the criticism that they were informed through the media about an amnesty application that was relevant to them before the TRC made contact with them. In these case this was felt to be highly problematic.

- Some Victims/Communities Favoured over Others

There was a feeling that ordinary victims were discriminated against in favour of high profile victims. The view was expressed that the hearings did not always capture the stories of 'ordinary' victims. In addition, it became apparent that many communities felt that they were left out and other communities were favoured over them. The TRC was perceived as having done good work elsewhere in the country. Repeatedly – even if mistaken – victims/survivors said "our area was the only one that was ignored".

- "False" Reconciliation

The point was raised that some victims felt that they were forced to reconcile or expected to forgive the perpetrators and this was in their opinion "false reconciliation".

- Expectations of Visiting Burial Sites

The point was also expressed that the TRC promised to take victims to some of the places where their families were buried – it was raised that although this occurred in some cases this usually did not happen and expectations were not always met.

- Lack of Security

Many victims were still concerned that they may become victims of violations again. Clearly, victims/survivors needed to be reassured that the violations are a thing of the past and will not re-occur. Many felt that for them to engage in a process of reconciliation and rebuilding of trust among previous enemies, they would first have to be assured of their own security. Many victims still lack this sense of security in their local communities. They do not feel the TRC has substantially contributed to their feelings of security within in their community in many cases.

- Concerns about Ongoing Effects of the TRC and the Past

Many survivors and victims are still concerned that no processes have been set-up to deal with the ongoing effects of the past and also the processes that have been set in motion by the TRC. The general psychological impact of the TRC in the broader society left many people with more questions than answers. Victims/survivors routinely commented that the psychological problems of dealing with the past and ongoing conflict persisted. Some of this was linked to what the TRC had uncovered. Mechanisms for ongoing support were a concern for victims/survivors.

- Institutional Transformation

While victims had been subjected to abuses by a number of different parties, there was a general concern about the need for transformation within specific institutions. Particularly it was the police that the victims/survivors raised a number of concerns about. The workshop participants raised a number of problems still existing within the police service which they felt the TRC has not adequately addressed or could perhaps address in its final report.

- Perceptions of the Police and their role in the TRC

On the whole, participants felt that police officials have not made any meaningful contribution to transforming their role from that of sustaining apartheid to becoming protectors of individuals' rights. It was felt that most of those who decided to appear before the TRC had not fully acknowledged or accepted responsibility for committing gross violation of human rights. Individuals within the SAPS who are interested in speaking out (and thus shedding light on the abuses of the past) are perceived to be in the minority and reluctant to do so because of fear of reprisals. Interestingly, victims/survivors expressed the view that police who had come before the TRC had shifted the responsibility to those higher up in the hierarchy and ignored their own role. It was also said that more senior officials had also not acknowledged their role in past abuses. The SAPS was thus labelled by the victims/survivors as an institution that is still not committed to change.

While some victims see the need for change within the SAPS as simply one of redirecting their efforts from a political to a criminal focus, others see a need for a complete transformation. They would like to see the establishment of a police service

that is human rights oriented in its actions and not one that uses old strategies against the so-called 'new enemy', i.e. criminals. Nonetheless, some contradictions were also apparent. An understanding of the human rights role of the police is present among most victims, but some still do not appreciate the need for the police to work within a human rights framework.

Despite the existence of the TRC, participants felt that the culture and methods of policing have not changed. While some changes in the structure and operation of the police are recognised, these were seen as superficial, as there was a perception among the victims/survivors that training and orientation of the police has not been addressed. Examples cited by workshop participants in support of such beliefs include the continued use of torture by the police, the ill-treatment of suspects and corruption by police officers.

- Personnel involved in Past Abuses

Many victims believed that the perpetrators of past abuses were still present in the ranks of the police. They pointed out that they were aware of individuals who had been named by victims who were still active members of the SAPS, as well as senior police officers who were in positions of authority when abuses occurred. The fact that no visible action has been taken against these members of the SAPS (both those directly responsible and those who failed to take action to prevent abuses by those under their command) is perceived by the victims as a denial of their suffering. The TRC process was not seen as contributing to helping in this regard, although some victims were thankful that they had heard some truth from perpetrators. The victims/survivors criticisms seemed to be directed very much to their local regions where police and magistrates responsible for past abuses are still operating.

Symbolic Reparations

Victims spoke out strongly for the need to transform the symbols of the past that offended them in their communities. They raised a number of concerns. These included:

- Local Symbols

They felt that the democratically elected local government had in many cases not succeeded in changing the image of the institutions that they have inherited. While many acknowledged that participation in these institutions has broadened in recent years, they felt these institutions still retained the image of the past. For example, it was pointed out that various local institutions and places still retained the names of notorious apartheid leaders. These local included schools, towns, streets and various public and official buildings.

- National Symbols

Even with regard to national symbols there were numerous comments from participants that the pervasive cultural heritage of 'white supremacy' still existed and that this should be done away with. It was felt that the monuments and statues representing this legacy should be destroyed or kept in museums.

- Public Holidays

In addition, there was a perception that a significant number of public holidays still carried the connotations of the past. Public holidays that commemorate events that symbolise the history and identity of narrow and sectoral interests, were seen by victims as problematic.

- History of the Country

Those in the workshops felt that the history of South Africa as it is portrayed in books, especially those in public library and school texts is problematic and biased. They saw this as an issue that impacted on the dignity of the victims of the previous government. Participants felt that these distortions should be corrected so as to give a more accurate and balanced view of the country's past.

Material Assistance

A focus on what material assistance the TRC may offer victims was not a predominant feature of the workshops. The TRC draft material assistance programme was only ready after eight of the workshops were completed by the CSV. Thus, only three of the workshops made mention of potential amounts put forward for assistance. These three workshops asked victims what they thought of potentially receiving approximately R17 000 – R24 000 per year over the next six years.

Based on the discussions in these three workshops it became evident that the TRC policy document was felt to address some of the needs of the victims adequately if this was to be the case. Victims – or at least the limited number who participated in the last three workshops – were supportive of the amounts expressed in the draft policy.

However, it is important to read the victims/survivors' non-critical approach to the draft material assistance policy with caution. Firstly, the material assistance component of reparations was only presented in three workshops. Secondly, most people in the workshops were extremely poor and felt that any amount of money would be useful in their current position. They had little knowledge of how to compare the amounts suggested with what may have been received through a civil claim. Nonetheless, having said this, people were aware that say R1 800 a month would have a relatively substantial impact on their present lifestyle.

The aspect that was seen as the most serious shortcoming in the policy was the time period within which the urgent interim reparation was to be delivered. At the time of running the workshops there was no urgent reparations available despite the TRC being operational for 18 months. This was seen as problematic as many victims/survivors were desperate for relief. Some Khulumani members even died (e.g. old age, sickness, etc.) before the end of the life of the TRC and before they could see any real tangible benefit.

Recommendations

1. Taking on board the criticisms raised: As was expressed earlier, victims/survivors often could readily point to the problems with the TRC but did not always make concrete suggestions as to how these could be addressed. The authors have in some cases re-worked concerns expressed in the workshops into recommendations. However, the first suggestion would be that the TRC itself take on board the criticisms expressed in this report as useful material for shaping their final report and recommendations. For example, it was raised that victims felt there was insufficient follow-up of perpetrators and the TRC should in its final report accept this as constructive criticism and, as it is part of the TRC's mandate, suggest ways to rectify this in its recommendations. Having said this, it should also be noted that the draft reparations committee policy at the time of conducting the workshops (e.g. about symbolic assistance, etc.) was also presented to survivors. In most cases the victims/survivors did feel that if the recommendations were carried through they would be useful.

2. Acknowledge that Reconciliation has not been achieved: It was felt that it was important for the TRC not to project in its final report that reconciliation had been achieved completely. The assertions made by victims/survivors throughout this report indicate that reconciliation is a difficult task and that although the TRC may have started some processes it has not achieved reconciliation in its short lifespan. Furthermore, it needs to be acknowledged that in some instances the TRC has exacerbated existing conflicts and these areas may require urgent attention.

3. Access to Psychological/Medical Services: It was suggested that the victims/survivors be given free access to accessible psychological and medical services. Victims/survivors thought they should be issued with a card which will then give them access to psychotherapy, trauma and medical services without having to pay. The victims/survivors felt that the money for such services should be paid by the state. A proper referral system should be set up so that psychological services would be easily accessible to victims in all areas. The issue of private services was not explored in detail in the workshops. However, the TRC is urged to investigate or make recommendations that private care facilities (perhaps as their part to the reconciliation process) also be made available to victims/survivors who have the psychological and medical care services card mentioned above. It should be noted that medical and psychological problems were urgent in many cases.

4. Meeting of Perpetrators: The TRC has in some cases facilitated meetings between victims and perpetrators. However, the issue of establishing a more coherent and extensive victim/offender mediation programme was raised in many of the meetings. Such a programme could help deal with the legacy of the conflict of the past. The TRC should make recommendations to this effect and provide mechanisms for support to organisations doing such work. It was felt that any victim offender mediation processes needed to be initiated and maintained by credible institutions.

5. Removal from public office: Based on what came out of the workshops the issue of the removal from public office of perpetrators of past abuses (including those who applied for amnesty and were granted amnesty) should be seriously considered. A number of victims/survivors were adamant that this becomes a reality. Amongst others, high-ranking and low-ranking police officials who committed abuses were mentioned by the workshops participants as those who needed to be removed from office to give space for newly trained personnel. In fact, it was recommended by many victims/survivors that all people who were granted amnesty for gross violations of

human rights should not be employed within the SAPS or government at all. Victims/survivors also felt that ex-Town Councillors with bad track records of human rights violations should also not be allowed to hold public office irrespective of them being granted amnesty or not. The TRC is urged in this regard to seriously address the issue of removal from public office in its final report and to respond to victims/survivors if this recommendation is not taken on board.

6. A reparations fund supported by beneficiaries and perpetrators: Beneficiaries and perpetrators need to show their remorse. One such way would be for the TRC to set-up a fund to which individuals and especially perpetrators could contribute. These funds should go to reparations. The TRC should particularly challenge perpetrators, in no uncertain terms, about the amounts of money and 'golden handshakes' that many of them received from the apartheid state. This still angers many victims/survivors. If possible these amounts should be published next to the amounts that victims will be receiving to show the disparities and losses experienced by those who were victimised. This could serve as a way of urging perpetrators to contribute their 'blood money' to the TRC reparations fund.

7. Dealing with divisions: It was time and time again noted that divisions still exist in communities and between race groups. We therefore plead that the inter/intra-community and racial divisions created through the apartheid system be addressed. There should be mechanisms set in place for white people as beneficiaries and other perpetrators from all groups to show remorse (e.g. give money to the reparations fund, do community service or work, sign the reconciliation register, etc.) and be actively involved in the ongoing process of national and community reconciliation. Meetings, workshops and public forums between previously segregated groups and conflicting communities should also be facilitated. Mechanisms and resources for supporting NGOs, victim support groups, church groups and CBOs to do this work after the life of the TRC should be set in place.

8. Security of victims/survivors: Many victims/survivors still feel unsafe in their communities and fear the repercussions of perpetrators. This matter needs to be addressed urgently. We therefore recommend that the security concerns of the victims be addressed through the establishment of a Special Police Task Group under the auspices of the body that is to implement the reparations policy. This body could be mandated to investigate allegations and concerns where victims/survivors feel their security is at risk, and ensure people receive appropriate protection if necessary.

9. The role of the police: As was expressed in the report, there is still limited faith in the police services and victims/survivors doubt that there has been transformation in the police services. Although it is acknowledged that transformation work has been taking place over the last few years, the participants in the workshops made references to cases of ongoing torture and abuse by the police. It is paramount that police officers be retrained especially in the protection of human rights. We recommend that the final report of the TRC should include a detailed chapter on the role of the police in the apartheid atrocities. A compulsory study of this chapter should then form part of the basic police training.

10. Prosecutions of perpetrators: It needs to be acknowledged that the TRC was a generous process for perpetrators who committed abuses that were condemned all over the world. In addition, despite the TRC's amnesty provision, there remains a strong feeling amongst victims/survivors that justice should be done and that this is

necessary if we are to create a new society. We therefore recommend that criminal prosecutions be pursued against all perpetrators who carry some responsibility for past human rights abuses, especially against those who failed to take up the opportunity to apply for amnesty. In addition, we further recommend that a mechanism needs to be put in place to assist TRC victims to pursue civil claims against perpetrators who did not apply for amnesty.

11. Ongoing investigations and follow-up: Many victims/survivors highlighted the fact that they were unclear about the status of the investigation into their case and that the TRC had not always reported back to victims/survivors. Others felt that the whole truth still had not come out despite all the efforts of the TRC and that more investigation were required. It is recommended that the TRC firstly, report back in detail to each individual on the status of their case. Secondly, that mechanisms and resources are put in place supported by the TRC so that victims/survivors can continue investigations if they so wish. This could happen through the state or through independent investigation units.

12. Reportback to communities: It was noted that many communities felt that the TRC had not reported back to them on the TRC process after a hearing was held. The TRC is requested to ensure that this happens – at least through effective distribution of an accessible TRC report and preferably in person.

13. Civilian oversight: Victims identified the need for civilian oversight in the operation of the security forces as a priority area. Although there is a recognition that some of these exist (e.g. Independent Complaints Directorate), victims/survivors feel they have not been given sufficient reassurances that abuses will not reoccur. It may be useful to recommend that victims/survivors sit on some of the present civilian oversight structures. The perceived vulnerability of victims of past abuses must thus be given special attention by the TRC. While victims see the establishment of Community Policing Forums as a positive initiative, they do not see it as something that is sufficiently empowered or that gives sufficient voice to their concerns. They therefore recommended that the current Community Policing Forums become statutory bodies, and that their mandate includes the responsibility to address the stories of victims of past human rights abuses. Further, as community-based structures they should also examine the possibility of prosecutions of suspected perpetrators.

14. Maintenance and Setting-up of Survivor Support Group: The CSVR and Khulumani acknowledge that at times the relationship between the Khulumani Support Groups/CSVr and the TRC have been strained. This is seen as a consequence of the legitimate demands the victim support groups have placed on the TRC to deliver reparations and services more effectively to victims/survivors. However, as the TRC draws to a close, it is important that the TRC recognises that such criticism are useful and beneficial – and in fact part of – the TRC process. In addition, the setting-up of groups was time and time again labelled by victims/survivors themselves as useful. Thus, in this regard, it is recommended that survivor support groups are set-up or maintained so as to address the ongoing problems resulting from the TRC and conflicts of the past. Groups will serve as a living memory of the TRC, while on the other hand mobilising more resources for the empowerment of the victims. The TRC should give their full support to such groups, acknowledge their role and contribution to the TRC and reconciliation process, and find constructive ways to maintain present groups and develop new ones.

15. Human rights education: We recommend that the history of South Africa be presented by school textbooks in such a manner that the suffering of victims across the political spectrum be recognised. The horrendous impact of both the system of apartheid, as well as the violence that destroyed communities, should be sensitively portrayed. In this regard, the TRC should write recommendations that fit in with current re-structuring of the Education Department and ideas for a new curriculum. Similarly, we recommend that programmes that provide intensive human rights education to the general public be encouraged and institutionalised within our schools and universities. Human rights education should start at as an early age as possible.

16. Symbols: Symbolic ways of representing the past (and the future) were considered critical for most victims/survivors. There was agreement on the importance of the TRC recommending the establishment of a number of such symbols (i.e. museums, re-naming, monuments, etc.), although there was caution expressed about the cost of such initiatives. However, if such symbolic gestures are undertaken, we recommend based on the workshops, that the new national symbols not be built around representations of heroism and courage of a few individuals. Rather these should be oriented towards recognising the dignity and strength of the many who have suffered and sacrificed for the realisation of a free society. Similarly, we recommend that the names of local institutions which are seen as offensive by victims of human rights and their relatives be replaced. Again rather than being renamed after 'new heroes', they should commemorate the suffering of victims, and be named in a manner that restores dignity to victims and the community as a whole.

Notes:

¹ It is acknowledged that it is probably more correct to use the term survivor of violence, the terms survivor and victim are used inter-changeably as the term 'victim' is used within the Act that defines the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This includes both direct victims/survivors and the family members of victims.

² Minutes and tape recordings from the workshops are available upon request from CSV. R.

³ CSV. R. has run over 100 TRC education workshops largely in Gauteng and its neighbouring regions. The workshops have been geared toward giving people information about the TRC process and also to expand the development of Khulumani Support Group. Reports on these workshops are available on request.

⁴ It is important to note that although categories have been outlined, often a victim/survivors' views may incorporate all or more than one category simultaneously.

⁵ Sekhukhuneland workshop – 14/08/1998

⁶ East Rand Workshop – 28/08/1997

⁷ Quoted from a workshop held at the Johannesburg Central Methodist Church (28/08/1997) attended by members of the Khulumani Support Groups in the East Rand Region.

⁸ Burgesfort workshop – 20/08/1997

⁹ Interestingly, this sentiment was often in contradistinction to victims who felt the TRC had tried too hard to get perpetrators to come forward.

¹⁰ East Rand Workshop – 28/08/1997

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