

**ENCOUNTERING THE OTHER**  
**COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS: A TOOL FOR DIALOGUE**

**Written for**  
**THE NELSON MANDELA FOUNDATION**

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## INTRODUCTION

Speaking about the on-going violence in South Africa and our collective inability to deal with it effectively, in a community meeting recently held in Cape Town, a participant remarked that too often we – as human beings – want to apply simple solutions to very complex problems. From the quiver in his voice it sounded as though he knew what he was talking about. As a Zimbabwean now living in South Africa, his mind probably went back to the vexed question of land redistribution in his country and the unprecedented economic, humanitarian and human rights crisis unleashed through the government's land policies. Maybe, from across the Limpopo River and the majestic Victoria Falls, he watched in wonderment as Southern African countries exceeded the 32% mark of the world's AIDS-related deaths yet condom-usage remained at an all-time low. Who knows, perhaps his thoughts were criss-crossing the curious blur of hope and despair, wondering how the promise of a South Africa that 'belongs to all who live in it' could transmute into the hellhole, where he, the migrant, becomes the hated hunted?

Precisely what tragedy so sharpened his young soul, we may never know. However, from east to west, south to north, the social consequences of a globalising world are demanding a re-think about the ways in which we understand and approach social problems. The complexities and paradoxes of increased incomes, higher living standards and growing inequality; increased mobility, multiculturalism and social exclusion; medico-technological advances and the rampant ravages of malaria, tuberculosis and the AIDS pandemics; advanced democracy and the muzzling of voices are all requiring new and creative ways of dealing with old problems. The recent protests over soaring food prices, which swept across the world from Haiti to Liberia to Japan, are but an example of grassroots communities calling into question the old one-directional tendency to look for simple, even simplistic, solutions to multi-faceted societal problems. The effects of decisions made in one part of the world are increasingly being felt by ordinary people in another part of the world. More often than not, the agreements reached at the official, high-level political and economic meetings, exert the greatest impact – frequently with devastating consequences – on those who are outside the decision-making loop. This anomaly challenges us to understand and appreciate the interconnectivity and interdependencies between social occurrences and to find new ways of harnessing and learning from the multiple experiences and narratives that are emerging from grassroots structures and communities. It requires us to acknowledge and to give voice to, what would at times appear to be, competing accounts of social change; conflicting perspectives; and divergent interests. Only when we

recognize the many and often contrasting points of view and assumptions about an issue and how this impacts on the totality and quality of human interactions, will we peel off the many layers that can lead us to the roots of present-day social problems.

It is in this context that dialogue—the art of listening and speaking to others, and getting others to listen and speak to each<sup>i</sup>—has moved into the public sphere. Research shows that from Cambodia to Bolivia and Guatemala to Ethiopia, grassroots communities are demanding spaces in which they can talk about issues, ranging from sexual and gender-based violence to creating more inclusive, participative processes for deepening democracy. In their quest for overall well-being, equality and social justice, communities, on the margins of decision-making, want the opportunities to speak their truths; to feel that they are plotting the changes they want to see; to craft and chisel their own narrative and to be the custodians of their vision.

The aspirations of grassroots communities in South Africa are no different. De Solorzano<sup>ii</sup> speaks of dialogues as ‘the building of new spaces of societal representation for extending the decision making circle’. This conceptualisation of dialogue, in different guises, under different names, is intrinsic to the social, political and cultural organisation of community life in South Africa. Its roots can be traced back to a time when villagers were called to a Legkotla or public meeting, presided over by the village chief or headman, to deliberate and reach consensus on issues that affected the entire community. In more recent times, agreements of a different kind were reached. In 1991, 22 prominent people from across South African society, including community activists, conservative politicians, African National Congress officials, trade unionists, academics, establishment economists, and corporate executives, came together. Their goal was to explore, argue, listen to and weave together their multiple experiences and stories, from different walks of life, in order to put South Africa on a path away from apartheid oppression towards national unity. This historic dialogue, commonly spoken of as the Mont Fleur Scenario, built the passageway for the birth of South Africa’s democracy in 1994.

The ‘art of listening and speaking to others, and getting others to listen and speak to each’ is therefore not new to South Africa. In fact, it defines the philosophy and values of this country’s most revered and treasured son – Mr Nelson Mandela. Throughout his life he has promoted the use of dialogue as a means of creating an equitable and just society. In his retirement, Mr Mandela’s extraordinary legacy, values and

vision have been incorporated into the work of the Nelson Mandela Foundation. The Nelson Mandela Foundation, through its Centre of Memory and Dialogue, seeks to contribute to a just society by promoting the vision and work of its Founder and, using his example, to convene dialogue around critical social issues. The Centre seeks to foster dialogue – often about difficult subjects, and between stakeholders who very often have strongly divergent views – in order to address the challenges we face today and so help find sustainable solutions. Launched by Nelson Mandela in 2004, the Centre uses memory – the historic examples of how solutions were attained through dialogue – to create a safe space, intellectually and ideologically, where meaningful discourse can take place within affected communities. The main objectives of the dialogues are to foster and facilitate discussions within communities around the critical issues they face, and so bring to the surface often latent or unarticulated tensions that classically are barriers to seeking common solutions; to create linkages between various community stakeholders, and between communities and the relevant policy makers; and to help build the capacity that enables communities to take ownership of the dialogue process.

This report outlines the rationale and strategy behind the Nelson Mandela Foundation's Programme to Promote Social Cohesion. It details the innovative ways in which it used the methodology known as Community Capacity Enhancement through Community Conversations (CCE) to promote dialogue between South African and migrant<sup>iii</sup> communities affected by violence. It explains, using the foundational precepts of dialogue, how the CCE at once enabled host and migrant communities to commence the arduous road towards building trust and common purpose and provided a framework for strengthening a culture of dialogue to accompany them on their journey.

## **WHAT IS DIALOGUE?**

Dialogue is derived from the Greek root of “dia” which means “through” and “logos” which is “the word” or “meaning”. The term is widely understood to mean ‘any communication that uses words to convey meaning’<sup>iv</sup>. In recent years, dialogue has come to be regarded as a specific kind of participatory process that is particularly well-suited to dealing with complex social problems.

There are several types of dialogue serving different purposes, described variously by different authors. However many definitions, the essence of dialogue is widely understood as a 'genuine interaction through which human beings listen to each other deeply enough to be changed by what they learn'<sup>v</sup>. Distinctively, David Bohm<sup>vi</sup> points out, dialogue describes a specific quality of conversation or communication that can lead to a collective new understanding. At the heart of this 'conversation' is the willingness of parties to open their minds to listening to others' point of view; to enquire and in so doing, to gain a deeper understanding of the other's perspectives, experiences and realities. This process of open enquiry and listening enables the parties to the conversation to begin to strip off previously held assumptions, perceptions and prejudices that had fragmented, interfered or blocked their communication. Once the communication is cleared of all hindrances, individuals begin to 'find' each other. They can then start the process of building relationship.

As Hal Saunders of the International Institute for Sustained Dialogue points out '...in dialogue, the intention is not to advocate but to inquire; not to argue but to explore; not to convince but to discover'<sup>vii</sup>. The purpose and power of dialogue is to accommodate the multiplicity of experiences, perspectives and realities and to enable individuals to transform, through understanding, the relationship with themselves and with others. It has specific advantages in situations where exclusion, intolerance of difference or mistrust have generated or perpetuated social tensions. In the safety of the dialogue space, people can freely express their understanding of the problem; how it impacts on them as individuals or as a community; and the changes they want to see. Through such sharing and listening, people often realise that though they may have different perspectives on an issue, they ultimately share a willingness and commitment to work towards a common solution. Such new insight or learning transforms relations and provides a new basis for mutual respect and co-operation. It empowers them in understanding and recognising the multiple dimensions and complexities of the problem situation and how, collectively, they can address the underlying causes as it opens up the opportunity for non-violent communication on key issues and grievances.

The quality of enquiry and listening is precisely what distinguishes dialogue from other kinds of conversation such as debates, discussions or negotiations. While there is a place and purpose for each of these, the objectives and relationships between parties are significantly different. Debates, for example,

often require parties to forward logical, analytical, articulate arguments on a particular topic. The one who best gets her point across, invariably emerges the winner. Similarly, the objective of a negotiation is for different parties to come to an agreement about a particular matter. The different sides bring their interests to the table, they argue, bargain and make trade-offs until agreement is reached.

Barnes<sup>viii</sup> notes, the value of dialogue lies in the balance it seeks between relationship-building and problem-solving and the virtuous dynamic it can generate as a result'. The trust-building that emanates from the collective commitment to find solutions to a shared problem, in turn, creates a ripple-effect that empower whole communities and influence the ways in which they relate to government and other political actors. Thus, she<sup>ix</sup> says, 'dialogue should be differentiated from debate, public-policy discussions and negotiations above all because it focuses not only on the problem at hand but also on the underlying relationships' that generate the problem situation in the first instance. In this way, the dialogue process helps to generate a new sense of ownership of both the process and the agreements or action plans that are developed and contributes to the creation of a culture of dialogue that promotes constructive, non-violent resolution of grievances.

The precise naming of dialogue processes may differ from place to place, often determined by specific cultural or political sensitivities. In large areas of Latin America, the term 'democratic dialogues' is widely used. In other parts, the term 'public engagement' is preferred. Or, as in the context of this programme, 'community conversations' is used to describe the dialogue process. However, regardless of the terms used, all dialogues committed to creating open broad-based platforms to address societal challenges, subscribe to the principles of inclusivity; joint ownership; learning; humanity; and sustainability. As pointed out in the Democratic Dialogue – A Handbook for Practitioners, these principles are the 'basic dimensions of dialogue practice—they are what make dialogue an effective tool for addressing the complex challenges facing societies'.

In the following sections we detail how the Nelson Mandela Foundation's Programme for Social Cohesion initiated, built support for and put together a community-based process to address the social tensions in South African townships, based on the governing principles of dialogue.

## THE CONTEXT OF VIOLENCE AGAINST MIGRANTS

In December 1994, armed youth gangs in Alexandra township, Johannesburg, embarked on 'Operation Buyelekhaya' (Go back home). Over several weeks Mozambicans, Zimbabweans and Malawians, blamed for the spike in crime, sexual assaults and unemployment, were hounded, attacked, forcibly expelled from their homes and frog-marched to the police station to cleanse the township of 'illegal migrants'<sup>x</sup>. These events signalled the start of a phenomenon that has maintained a stranglehold on South African communities for the past 16 years and continues to this day. The tragic account of violence against migrants include the 1998 Pretoria train attacks and subsequent electrocution of a Mozambican and two Senegalese nationals; the destruction and looting of more than 238 shacks and violent expulsion of Zimbabwean nationals living in Zandspruit in October 2001; and the attacks in the Western Cape in July and August 2006 that left at least 32<sup>xi</sup> Somali traders dead. The most dramatic mobilization against migrants, however, occurred in May 2008, when within weeks an unprecedented orgy of violence and destruction fanned out from Johannesburg to most major towns in the country. In the aftermath 62 people (including 21 South Africans) were left dead, an estimated 670 were injured, millions of Rands worth of property looted or destroyed and more than 100,000 asylum seekers, refugees and migrants displaced.

The events of 2008 and the violations on the lives and properties of migrants that continued throughout 2009 and well into the first half of this year, took place against the backdrop of an upsurge of community protests. By the first quarter of 2010 an unprecedented 54 protests had been recorded, more than half of the 105 reported incidents during the previous 12 months<sup>xii</sup>. Many of the protests turned violent, resulting in some instances in the destruction of municipal property, while in places such as De Doorns, Du Noon, Siyathemba, Atteridgeville, Westernburg, Riviersonderend and several others, community anger soon turned on the lives and properties of migrants. A multitude of theories and speculations have been forwarded to understand the complex forces that gave rise to such protests and how, in several locations, apparently legitimate grievances about the slow pace of service delivery, maladministration in local municipalities or disenchantment with political leadership, rapidly turned into attacks on migrants. Research by non-governmental organisations, carried out in the aftermath of the violence, suggests that the answers to these questions are complex and varied and requires a deeper examination of the disaffections and anger that continues to seethe amongst the poor. Some ascribe it to the 'outsider-insider phenomenon' – the tendency to attack those that we see as 'other', those who are more vulnerable and seen as

outsiders.<sup>xiii</sup> Others point to poor service delivery; poverty; ineffective migration management; perceived competition for resources, jobs, women, and houses; and high crime rates as the main triggers for the violence. To uncover and understand the roots beneath these outward manifestations, it is important that we turn the focus to the historical and structural antecedents of violence in South Africa. As Wits University's Forced Migration Studies Programme, points out, understanding the recent wave of attacks against migrants, should not be isolated from a more general history of violence in informal settlements and townships in South Africa. The structural violence, they argue, effected by the state through repression and legislated inequalities in the distribution of resources and opportunities during the Apartheid era has created a climate in which all forms of social existence – including housing, education, jobs, wages, and service delivery – are politicized.

Sixteen years into its democracy and with one of the most visionary, rights-based Constitutions in the world, where and how did South Africans lose sight of the foundational values of respect, equality and human dignity of all people? What could have been done to avert this situation? What were the lessons learnt after the 2008 attacks, if any, and how have these been incorporated into national and provincial safety and security plans? Is demonization of the 'outsider' one of the unintended consequences of South Africa's nation-building project? What are the underlying causes of frustration, resentment and aggression that generated the rage of the poor in South Africa's sprawling informal settlements to attack with those more vulnerable than themselves? Can the attacks be attributed to South Africa's 'culture of violence'? Why was the violence directed mainly at African migrants? How do migrants contribute to their isolation from local communities? What is the significance of the sites of violence and the involvement and/or connivance of the poor?

### **BACKGROUND ON NMF'S PROGRAMME TO PROMOTE SOCIAL COHESION**

In February 2009, the Nelson Mandela Foundation (NMF) launched a pilot initiative to advance social cohesion in South African communities affected by the xenophobic<sup>xiv</sup> violence of 2008. The overall purpose of the programme was to identify and address the underlying causes of anger and frustration in communities affected by recent incidents of violence, through facilitated community conversations, in order to promote local problem-solving and to advance social cohesion.



We<sup>xv</sup> adopted a working definition of social cohesion as ‘that which galvanizes a collective or a group of people around a common set of values, based on mutual respect, tolerance, freedom from fear, social solidarity and respect for human dignity’. Implicit in this is the recognition that the construction of social cohesion is derived from the development and cultivation of a set of relationships, with and between individuals, communities, community-based structures and organisations, government departments and institutions of governance, based on mutual trust; active engagement, consultation and participation; and respect for diversity. We believe that the advancement of social justice is central to the process of social change and that in addressing historically unjust political, economic and social relations, we would contribute to the building of a society based on ‘democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights’.

The specific focus of the Programme to Promote Social Cohesion – as the pilot project came to be known – was to gain an understanding of the values, perceptions and beliefs that underpin interactions between host and migrant communities. It was expected that attending to the human interactions at the micro-level, would provide deeper insight into the historical, structural and psychological stressors; their potential for enabling or mitigating social tensions; and the opportunities for building cohesion between South African and migrant communities.

As previously said, though some of the attacks against migrants took place in townships or informal settlements that had also been the sites of violent protest action, it was not within the purview of this programme to explore the underlying reasons for violent actions related to service delivery protests, workers strikes or municipal by-elections that occurred during the implementation period of this pilot project.

### ***Programme Goal and Objectives***

The overall goal of NMF’s Programme to Promote Social Cohesion was to identify and address the root causes of violence and to contribute to building better relations within South African communities<sup>xvi</sup> and between host and migrant communities. Its three strategic objectives were to:

- Facilitate 30 community conversations, using the Community Capacity Enhancement (CCE) methodology, in selected sites to enable South African and migrant communities to

contribute to the creation of a culture of tolerance, respect for human dignity and social justice.

- Enhance the capacity of 30 facilitators to implement community conversations, using the CCE methodology, to promote constructive dialogue within and between South Africans and migrants to build socially cohesive communities.
- Conduct research to document community-based initiatives aimed towards building tolerance, respect for human dignity and social justice and to celebrate the resilience of communities that have overcome adversity.

The pilot project was implemented in 5 provinces, namely Gauteng; the Western Cape; KwaZulu Natal; Mpumalanga; and the Eastern Cape provinces. Over the course of several years attacks on the lives and property of migrants had been recorded in almost all parts of South Africa. However, within the nature and necessary constraints of a pilot project, it was agreed to concentrate efforts in the provinces most affected by the 2008 xenophobic violence. Similarly, after extensive discussions with non-profit and community-based organisations working with refugees and migrants and in close consultation with the facilitators involved in the NMF initiative, it was agreed that the pilot project would be implemented in the townships or informal settlements in Khayelitsha and Nyanga (Western Cape); Atteridgeville and Diepsloot (Gauteng); Albert Park and Cato Manor (KwaZulu Natal); Leandra and Nkomazi (Mpumalanga); and New Brighton, Walmer and Jeffrey's Bay (Eastern Cape). Between May 2009 and April 2010, 30 community conversations, attended by a total 1819 South African and migrant participants, were successfully completed.

### **CULTIVATING PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS**

As mentioned earlier in this report, dialogue is at the heart of the values that sustain the work of the Nelson Mandela Foundation. The values of human dignity, social justice and the peaceful resolution of difficult social problems through dialogue, defines not only what NMF does but, importantly also how it relates to and draws in others, in partnership, to strengthen capacities for dialogue. From the outset, therefore, in formulating a response to the complex matter of violence against migrants, NMF took account of its own

strengths and constraints and the opportunities for building partnership with other organisations working in the field. NMF commands a high degree of trust and influence in the political sphere, with government departments, policy-makers, Chapter 9 institutions, multilateral agencies and other high-level strategic stakeholders. It has also earned the respect of ordinary South Africans and migrants as a credible institution that can represent their interests, challenges and aspirations with impartiality and passion. However, with limited staff numbers, it does not have a direct presence in the communities affected by violence. To cultivate a broadly shared sense of ownership, NMF put in place an implementation collective who had the experience and competencies to initiate, organise and facilitate community conversations that would be sensitive to wider socio-political dynamics and the specific cultural expressions of despair and hope among South African and migrant communities.

It situated the Programme to Promote Social Cohesion in the Dialogues for Justice Programme within NMF's Centre for Memory and Dialogue. Under the leadership of Dr Mothomang Diaho, the NMF Dialogue team contributed their extensive experience in diverse dialogue methodologies, approaches and tools and their specific familiarity with UNDP's Community Capacity Enhancement through Community Conversations methodology. The team, among others, also provided strategic oversight, direction and programmatic management support; and undertook networking, advocacy and lobbying with national government departments, international non-government organisations and other relevant strategic partners to raise the profile of this dialogue initiative.

To assist the Dialogue team, NMF appointed two independent contractors, Bea Abrahams and Ken Mutuma, as their Implementing Partners for the programme. Bea is a South African national whose professional background is in Psychology, with considerable experience working with survivors of human rights abuse and torture. Ken is a Kenyan national whose professional background is in International Human Rights Law, with wide-ranging experience in legal counsel in refugee settings. Between them, they have more than 35 years' experience working with forced migrants and communities emerging from conflict in South Africa and in other parts of Africa. As Implementing Partners they were responsible for the day-to-day management and coordination of the programme, including the coordination and implementation of the community conversations in the 5 designated provinces. This included, among others, social mobilisation, relationship building and liaison with operational partners, provincial and local government departments,

ward councillors, religious and opinion leaders and other key stakeholders; and support to continuous capacity development of facilitators to implement community conversations.

To build the longevity of this dialogue initiative, the NMF entered into formal operational partnerships with non-profit and community-based organisations working in the field of violence prevention; migration; and social cohesion in the 5 target provinces. The selection of operational partners was guided by organisations' presence and credibility in grassroots communities; the synergies between the aims and objectives of the NMF programme and its commitment to community dialogue and the organisational mandates of the operational partners; their commitment to working with both host and migrant communities; and their willingness to 'second' facilitators to be trained in the CCE methodology and to assist with the facilitation of community conversations in their respective provinces. The terms of the partnership was set out in a Memorandum of Understanding, which among others, also detailed the specific roles and responsibilities of each of the parties in the implementation strategy. Operational Partners, among others, undertook to facilitate the enhancement of organizational capacity development through endorsement of the CCE methodology; to build and maintain relationships with the local stakeholders to facilitate the advancement of the aims and objectives of this programme; and to promote the core principles of inclusivity, diversity and tolerance enshrined in the programme. The NMF signed such partnership agreements with a total of 22 organisations, or on average 4- 5 organisations per province.

In terms of the Memorandum of Understanding, Operational Partners were requested to select, from their existing staff pool, facilitators who would undergo training in the CCE methodology and assist with the facilitation of community conversations. Though the selection of facilitators was left to the discretion of the organisation concerned, NMF provided a set of criteria to guide the selection process. The criteria included:

- Demonstrated knowledge of socio-political dynamics in selected communities
- Demonstrated experience in working with communities emerging from social conflict
- Willingness to work with migrant communities
- Demonstrated commitment to accountability and respect for community socio-cultural hierarchical structures

- Sensitivity to and respect for diversity, cross-cultural, multi-ethnic dynamics
- Ability and willingness to work in a multi-disciplinary, multi-lingual team
- Minimum of 12 years education or equivalent experience.

To ensure multi-cultural understanding and sensitivity within the facilitation team and in the way the community dialogues were implemented, the facilitation team was comprised of both South African nationals and nationals from other African countries. Out of a team of 28 facilitators, 13 were from countries such as Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Cameroon, Zimbabwe and Uganda. Ten of the 28 facilitators were females and though we were not able to achieve the optimal gender balance in the facilitation team, every effort was made to ensure sensitivity to the specific needs and unique experiences of women and the gendered dimensions of violence and social instability. The specific responsibilities of the facilitators included facilitating all community conversations in their respective provinces; record-keeping and proper documentation of community conversation processes and outcomes, in accordance with the principles and tools of the CCE methodology; and identifying local organizations, local government structures, opinion-makers and other key stakeholders to enhance relationship building and social mobilization at the local level.

### ***Developing Facilitators' Capacity in CCE Methodology***

For the past few years, NMF has applied the CCE methodology to identify communities' concerns with regards to HIV and AIDS. However, to our knowledge the CCE methodology had not previously been used to explore and address relations between host and migrant communities within the context of violence and xenophobia in South Africa. The first task therefore was to modify the original CCE Handbook to meet the objectives of the programme. Specifically, we had to adapt the CCE group exercises to be more responsive to the complex historical and structural characteristics of violence and the unique manifestations of xenophobia in South Africa; and to include information and relevant exercises about existing policy and legal frameworks relevant to the rights of refugees and other categories of migrants.

Two mandatory 7-day national capacity development workshops for facilitators were held in January and May 2009. The purpose of the January workshop was to introduce facilitators to the CCE methodology and the use of specific tools or group exercises in the various stages of the CCE methodological cycle. The

follow-up workshop in May was designed to consolidate their knowledge and application of the CCE methodology and to deepen their understanding of conflict dynamics and working in situations of social tension. During the course of both capacity development workshops, facilitators were also required to organize and facilitate real-life community conversations to provide them with the necessary exposure and experiential learning opportunities.

After completion of the national workshops, provincial teams of 5 to 6 facilitators were set up to work in close collaboration with the Implementing Partners. The Implementing Partners were each assigned responsibility for the coordination of two provincial facilitation teams and shared responsibility for the facilitation team based in the Western Cape. In line with the CCE methodology's 'Follow-Up and On-Site Support Visits' framework, the Implementing Partners were required to provide on-site capacity development support to provincial facilitation teams. The on-site support visits, which usually coincided with the hosting of community conversations, took place over 5 days and were designed to:

- Obtain progress updates, discuss timelines and deliverables and obtain understanding about local developments;
- Collect and review reports and documentation relating to the previous community conversation;
- Review with facilitators the use of skills/tools acquired in the training and to identify and address new training gaps;
- Explore with participating organisations, facilitators and community members the process dynamics of Community Conversations; and to
- Cultivate relationships with a range of local government, community and faith-based structures and non-government organisations to strengthen buy-in and enrolment for the CCE methodology and community conversations

## **MORE ABOUT THE COMMUNITY CAPACITY ENHANCEMENT THROUGH COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS METHODOLOGY (CCE)**

The Community Capacity Enhancement through Community Conversations (CCE) methodology was originally developed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and has since been adopted

by the Nelson Mandela Foundation. The CCE is a community-based dialogic approach, based on human rights principles of equity, equality, non-discrimination, human dignity, non-violence, participation, inclusion, accountability and responsibility. It draws on a participatory approach of co-learning among participants from different social, cultural, ethnic or religious backgrounds, where, through a process of listening, enquiry and reflection participants must critically examine their own values, attitudes and beliefs. This process of discovery and co-learning allows participants to identify and break through the barriers that had blocked communication, thus enabling them to find new and constructive ways of relating to each other.

The main means for achieving this is through community conversations – open community discussions guided by facilitators trained in the CCE methodology. Community conversations are particularly powerful in contexts where a historical pattern of exclusion underlies the societal problems to be addressed. In this context, community conversations give a voice to those who usually have no say in key decision-making processes. Through using an interactive, inclusive approach to understanding issues and generating new thinking and potential solutions, community conversations encourage confidence in participants' own knowledge. In this way the community conversations provide safe spaces where people can share their experiences and perspectives of a problem situation and reflect on how their individual values and behaviours affect their relations with others. The process of sharing opens up opportunities for rebuilding trust, reshaping relationships and charting out new ways of dealing with common problems. Importantly, participants set their own targets for what is to be achieved, take ownership for the change they want to see, and in so doing provide a more enduring plan for social change.

### **WHY COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS TO BUILD RELATIONS BETWEEN HOST AND MIGRANT COMMUNITIES?**

Prior to the implementation of the community conversations, a short field survey<sup>xvii</sup> was conducted in the selected sites. As part of this process we also reviewed available literature on the probable causes of the xenophobic violence in May 2008. The aim was to create a profile of the socio-economic, political and cultural conditions in these communities and to deepen our understanding of how these conditions affect relationships between migrants and South African communities.

This preliminary assessment offered a glimpse into the complex mix of socio-cultural, political and economic conditions that contribute to tensions between host and migrant communities. With unemployment, on average, at 48% and the average earnings, for 60% of those who are employed, at less than R1999 per month, the struggle for scarce resources is an abiding reality in most households. While the majority of South African respondents chose not to comment on the presence of migrants in their communities, among those who responded, the perceptions of migrants were all negative. Responses ranged from 'they bring theft, guns and drugs'; 'they get our ID's and take our grants'; they increase the load on taxpayers'; to 'they take our jobs and make life expensive. I hate them'. Responses to the question, 'How can migrants contribute to their host communities?' reflected an even greater divergence of views. On the one end, respondents felt migrants 'share their skills and create jobs, 'bring peace', 'contribute to economic growth' or that 'there will be less conflicts if they are part of the community'. On the other end, respondents felt migrants 'burden our resources', 'must be deported', 'we can develop without them' or 'they cannot give, they only take'.

However, communities' frustration about their living poor conditions; a perceived state of lawlessness where criminal and rogue elements continue to operate with impunity; and the apparent lack of accountability from key local and provincial government departments, continued to seethe below the surface. Throughout 2009 and the first half of this year, in several townships<sup>xviii</sup> across the country violence linked to public protests over corruption and the failure of local government to deliver basic services such as housing, electricity, sanitation and other essential services, erupted once again. As in 2008, refugees and other migrants became easy targets for communities' frustration and anger.

The curious trend of service-related protests escalating to violence against migrants underlined the need for the creation of inclusive, safe spaces where both South African and migrant communities could talk freely about their fears, perceptions and beliefs of each other. The tendency, however, to act upon common attitudes and perceptions with violence, called for the urgent development of organisational and grassroots capacities to promote non-violent strategies for resolving differences and misperceptions. It also seemed to suggest that there is more to the attacks against migrants 'than meet the eye' and that there are indeed several levels of anger and frustration, including intense disaffection with the slow pace of economic and social change since the dawn of democracy. The popular slogan 'Masenze ilizwe lingalawuleki' (Let's make



the country ungovernable), that accompanied most community protests, seemed to point not only to a resolve to use violence to get government's attention, but also to more broad-based acceptance of violence as a means for resolving grievances. The torching of municipal property, the frequent outcry against the 'cadre deployment system', and the violent expulsion of local government officials perceived to be ineffective, at best seemed to suggest a breakdown in trust between communities and government, and at worst, wide-spread contestation of the substance and form of democracy in South Africa. If indeed communities were signalling the demand for greater involvement in local government, it would be crucial to bring in the voices from the periphery and to put in place mechanisms through which communities can communicate their expectations and concerns to government, without resorting to violence.

## **PURPOSE OF THE COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS**

To obtain a better understanding of the complexities of concerns, anger and frustration at community level, the community conversations were designed to meet several inter-related objectives. Within the broad goal of seeking to uncover the root causes of violence and to contribute to building better relations between host and migrant communities, the specific objectives of the community conversations were to:

- Promote an understanding of the complexities of violence and the unique manifestations of xenophobia in South Africa;
- Promote open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups with different ethnic, national, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds, on the basis of mutual understanding, trust, and respect for diversity;
- Enable communities to give voice to their concerns and to find avenues through which they can participate in decision-making processes at the local, provincial and national levels;
- Develop the capacities of individuals and community-based structures to encourage constructive, non-violent strategies for dealing with community problems.

## **BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS FOR COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS**

Our strategy for mobilizing support and identifying participants for the community conversations was largely determined by the nature of the issue we aimed to tackle and the specific objectives of the community conversations. In each of the ten local sites where community conversations were implemented, we put in place a three-pronged strategy, guided by the fundamental principle of inclusivity - ensuring that the range of different voices and perspectives of the tensions existing at the local community level be incorporated into the dialogue process.

Central to the ethos of the CCE is the belief that the inherent and indigenous knowledge of all individuals, organisations and communities contribute to the identification of problems, the resolution of challenges and the mobilisation towards positive action. Within this context, the principle of inclusivity expresses the underlying assumption that, to the extent that everyone who is part of a problem situation can be involved or represented in a dialogue process, the participants collectively have key pieces of the 'expertise' they need to address their own problems, as opposed to being dependent on the intervention of "experts. A related assumption is that, for change to be sustainable, the people in the problem system need to have a sense of ownership of the problem, the process for addressing it, and proposed solutions that result. To develop this sense of ownership, communities must be enabled to exercise their capacity to identify the changes they need, to 'own' these changes and to take the necessary steps to make the changes they want to see.

The commitment to providing an inclusive dialogue space was especially relevant in the townships and informal settlements, where so much of the social tensions between South Africans and migrants seem to stem from their lived experiences of exclusion and marginalisation. Their inclusion in the community dialogue process therefore presented an important opportunity to give a voice to South Africans and migrants and to give them back their power to make decisions about their own lives.

In designing a strategy for bringing relevant voices into the dialogue space, we focused our attention on three major categories or 'constituencies'. These were broadly grouped as follows:

- South Africans and migrants living in the specific townships or informal settlements where community conversations took place.

- Formal and informal community-based structures – these included community and faith-based organisations, civic associations, taxi associations, youth formations, religious and community leaders, shop-owners or trade associations, community policing forums, local political formations and key opinion-leaders.
- Local government officials, local councillors, ward committees, migrant organisations, and non-government organisations working in the affected communities.

The strategy for mobilizing support and identifying participants for the community conversations, therefore, revolved around three key activities, namely, the use of an extensive database; meetings with community-based structures; and the involvement of individuals from the host and migrant communities. We also worked on the assumption, that by virtue of their organisations' presence in the local sites, the facilitators on the NMF programme would have access to a network of critical stakeholders, including those identified by NMF. Such networks could be mobilised, within minimal time and costs, to participate in and contribute to follow-up activities arising from the community conversations. The cultivation and maintenance of relationships with key stakeholders was therefore seen as an on-going process, actively supported by operational partners, the facilitators and the Implementing Partners.

### ***Using a Database***

At the start of the programme, the NMF and the Implementing Partners developed an extensive database of key stakeholders in each of the 5 target provinces. The database, compiled from existing contact lists and NGO directories, captured information about the type and location of organisation, key contact person, and physical, email and telephone contact details. It was further segmented according to non-government organisations, community and faith-based organisations, provincial and local government departments, political figures, local councillors, ward committees and other community-based structures operating in each of the local implementation sites. Prior to community conversations, provincial facilitation teams were requested to submit additional names and contact details of individuals, organisations and other structures to be invited to the community conversations. Similarly, after a community conversation, attendance registers were submitted to NMF to ensure that new contacts are added to the existing database. NMF then sent out invitations and reminders about an upcoming community conversation, electronically and via text messaging, to all the contacts on the database. In this manner, by always sending out invitations to a

set group of contacts, we endeavoured to provide continuity and follow-through on activities or agreements reached in the community conversations.

### ***Meeting with Community-based Structures***

A key objective of the community dialogue process was to develop the capacities of individuals and community-based structures to encourage constructive, non-violent strategies for dealing with community problems. Within the limitations of this pilot initiative, this meant inculcating an awareness of the value of substantive conversations where fundamental issues can be worked through, different or conflicting opinions can be respected and where, collectively solutions can be found for common problems. At the local community level, this also meant taking account of the complexities of the community struggles, the multiple points of social tension and the range of actors involved.

Consequently, prior to every community conversation the provincial facilitation teams and an Implementing Partner spent three to four days in the local site where the community conversation was to take place. The goal was to identify and meet with local councillors; ward committees; local community-based organisations; migrant groupings; youth structures; representatives of major political parties; community leaders and key opinion-leaders to inform them of the objectives of the dialogue process and to obtain their buy-in and support for the community conversations. Specifically, we were also interested in learning about their perspectives on the key challenges facing their respective communities; their perceptions around the presence of migrants and the events that triggered the violent attacks on migrants; and the opportunities that exist for building better relations with migrant communities.

Our engagement with stakeholders prior to upcoming community conversations was invaluable beyond the process of building relationships. It provided the opportunity to physically 'feel' the texture of undercurrents and relations within the community. In the local contexts, where the social and political dynamics were in a state of almost constant flux, the physical exposure to key actors spoke volumes about the power imbalances and tensions but also the hopes and aspirations in the community. Immersed in these community settings where there exists high level of mistrust towards people, especially those perceived to be from 'outside', the buy-in and support for the dialogue process was especially important. By meeting with and building relationships with the spectrum of key actors, from local councillors, non-profit

organisations to migrant associations, we wanted to ensure that potential dialogue participants feel able to trust and take ownership of the process. By encouraging joint ownership and, to the extent possible, we wanted to ensure that we 'level the playing fields' between local councillors and community organisations, between local organisations and migrant associations so that they all find their voice in dialogue. A key role for the facilitators, dialogue practitioners argue, is to create horizontal spaces for discussion.

During the course of these meetings we became aware that there were a multiplicity of formal, informal and parallel 'structures', some of whom advance agendas that serve their own interests of economic gain and self-interest. In all instances they wielded significant power over sections of the community, in particular, and the socio-political community dynamic, in general. Specifically, in several implementation sites there were perceptions that some informal structures were implicated in the attacks against migrants or the collection of 'protection' money from migrant shop-owners. In other instances, some informal structures were said to be involved in the illegal sale of municipal land or instigating the erection of unauthorised shacks in already over-crowded informal settlements. The potential for aggravating existing social tensions posed significant challenges to community relations and ultimately to the objectives of the dialogue process. As a result, we made a decision to extend our consultations and to meet with as many informal and parallel community structures as possible, irrespective of their role in the community. Given the power some of these structures appropriated and the relative support they enjoyed in sections of the community, especially among the youth, it was important to bring their perspectives into the dialogue process. In so doing, we believed that by engaging them we could neutralise their capacity to undermine the community conversations process and, hopefully reduce their potential for disrupting community relations.

### ***Engaging Individuals from the Host and Migrant Communities***

Our primary goal for the community conversations was to create an inclusive, safe space for open discussion. The tensions between host and migrant communities and the on-going violence against migrants is a contentious matter – it evokes strong and often highly-charged conflicting views. It is fraught with assumptions about power relations, insider-outsider dynamics, attitudes and subliminal texts of racism, xenophobia and exclusion and yet it is profoundly human. To assemble a group of people who could give expression to the multitude of nuances, dimensions and complexities of this matter and emerge with new

understanding and insights to commence the journey towards trust-building and new relationships, was not going to be easy.

We approached this goal with a number of practical considerations in mind. At the outset we had decided that in order to stimulate quality, substantive conversation, we would aim to bring 60 to 80 participants, at a time, to the community dialogue. At the same time, we also wanted to ensure that the dialogue space is inclusive of the range of experiences and voices of affected people – migrants and South Africans – and that there exists sufficient ownership of the process to ensure that commitments made in the conversations are carried forward. From the onset we were faced with the dilemma of choosing between two alternative approaches that translate individual impact into wider scale impact – adopting an approach that focuses on more people or one that targets only the key people. The ‘more people’ approach focuses on increasing the number of people who are engaged in and support the effort at societal change that the dialogue initiative represents. The ‘key people’ approach focuses on specific individuals because they facilitate access to a larger group and have leverage beyond themselves to influence opinion or effect change.<sup>xix</sup> We decided to blend these approaches and to open the dialogue space to both representatives of organisations and individuals. In so doing, we aimed to close the gaps or perceived differences among participants and create opportunities for the establishment of an open sphere for dialogue and discussion. In several local implementation sites, for a host of different reasons, organised groupings or migrant associations are relatively few. It was important, therefore, not only to create the space for individuals to speak about their personal experiences but also to acknowledge and legitimate the pain and hopes of migrants so that they could take back their power. For individuals from the host community, the community conversations provided a rare opportunity to speak openly and feel that they are being listened to. Given the history of exclusion and the perception that government is not taking them seriously, speaking directly to local councillors or government officials in the community conversations, was a particularly profound moment for many South African participants.

## IMPLEMENTING COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

The CCE methodological framework outlines the steps in community conversations and links the change process to facilitation skills and tools. It recognizes the critical role of facilitators and a supportive facilitation process to bring about change in complex social problems.

### *Facilitating Community Conversations*

'Through dialogue our natural intelligence is able to reveal itself. Our humanity is afforded the possibility of recognizing itself', write the authors of IDEA's Dialogue for Democratic Development. This truism finds expression in the interactions between dialogue participants but, equally, in the skill of facilitating the process. The CCE's emphasis on facilitation rather than the intervention of 'experts,' locates the role of the facilitator squarely within the twin dialogic principles of learning and humanity. It recognises that in dialogue, facilitators are neither bystanders nor outsiders with a recipe for change, but rather subjective, active participants in the process of social change. Rather than feigning any 'objectivity' through the third person, they too must confront their biases, suspend their judgment of others and acknowledge how their personal transformation and learning shape the outcomes of the process.

The primary role of the facilitator is to create a safe place. This, among others, entails embracing the fundamental principles of dialogue that speak to including and valuing the perspectives of all; enabling a process where all participants feel they can take ownership of the process and decisions reached; creating a milieu that empowers both the act of speaking and the act of listening; and recognising the common humanity of all through empathic listening and enquiry.

Some of the specific skills to empower the facilitator to become, at once, an enabler of change and an active participant in the change process, are:

- **Asking Strategic Questions:** If dialogue is indeed the 'genuine interaction through which human beings listen to each other deeply enough to be changed by what they learn' and at the heart of this conversation rests the quality of enquiry, then 'how' the facilitator poses questions becomes critically important. Strategic questioning is an enabling way of soliciting information and

perspectives that opens up several options for answers. It is a way of asking critical questions, devoid of value judgements, that will enable dialogue participants to reflect on issues that affect them and deepen their understanding of concerns and options for change. The authors of *Democratic Dialogues – A Handbook for Practitioners* refer to this as 'leading with curiosity'— asking questions that show respect for diverse perspectives without taking sides, and that help the group's common humanity to emerge.

- **Active Listening:** Active listening is a communication skill in which the listener in a conversation follows closely what is being said and gives feedback to the speaker using verbal and non-verbal expressions. Active listening takes place when a speaker realizes that she/he is being listened to. Unlike selective or discriminatory listening, active listening is an approach to social change that strengthens the capacity of individuals, opens up a host of new ideas and activates the knowledge and resources of each individual. It favours sharing and the acceptance of new and diverse perspectives and mutual learning. Often people listen selectively to what they agree with or are comfortable with. However, in active listening, the listener has to keep an open mind and recall what is being said, irrespective of whether s/he agrees or not. In a change process, facilitators and participants in conversation need to listen to one another in a way that encourages discussion and generates new alternatives. In a group process, active listening allows for a demonstration of the fact that group members respect each other's opinions. It can help weaken relationships based on power and guard against discrimination of those who are perceived as vulnerable or without power. Elements of active listening include maintaining eye contact; not showing signs of disagreement or being frustrated with the speaker's opinion; observing and acknowledging non-verbal expressions; and paraphrasing to confirm what has been said.
- **Reframing:** listening to and reflecting back what is said, to enhance understanding and foster reflection.
- **Summarizing:** providing a sense of what has been accomplished and highlighting areas of agreement and disagreement.



Throughout the CCE capacity development and on-site support process accompanying the community conversations, facilitators were encouraged to model these skills. Through critical questioning, small group exercises, role plays and other interactive exercises, facilitators were consistently challenged to interrogate common perceptions, attitudes and belief systems that often either facilitate or hamper relations between different ethnic groups, people from different class or ideological positions or between different nationalities. An additional goal, therefore, was to facilitate a process of self-reflection and self-knowledge so that facilitators identify and confront their own prejudices. In this way facilitators 'live' the change experience and create the milieu for safe, open discussions that lead participants onto the journey of self-discovery, mutual understanding, trust and changed perspectives, attitudes and behaviours.

### ***Steps in Facilitating Community Conversations***

The facilitation of community conversations involve six steps, namely, relationship building; identification of concerns; exploration of concerns; decision-making and planning; action; and reflection and review. Each step has a specific objective and set of tools or small group exercises to initiate and support the social change process. The section below details the purpose of each step in the community conversations process and highlights some of the tools or small group exercises we used to achieve this purpose.

**Relationship Building:** During this phase, facilitators use the community conversation to initiate a discussion between participants, many of whom may not know each other or in some instances, may have been in a difficult or tense relationship. Using strategic questioning, listening and observational skills, and the facilitator uses small group exercises to encourage participants to share their views and perceptions about common issues. In this manner participants gradually break through the barriers in their communication and start getting to know each other as humans rather than representing a particular position or interest. It is also an opportunity for participants to start discussions about their expectations of values such as confidentiality, mutual respect, and acceptance of differing opinions. In the context of this programme, the u Historical Time Line group exercise was found to be particularly helpful. As part of this exercise, participants were required to sketch out some of the key events that took place in their places of origin and then discuss the significance of such events in their current situations. It provided an opportunity for migrants and South Africans to begin to reflect on their shared histories and the many ways in which all

people, irrespective of nationality, ethnic group or class position, aspire to values such as safety, security and human dignity.

**Concern Identification:** The concern identification phase incorporates several tools and activities to assist the participants to identify and select the key areas of concern for their community. One of the exercises for this phase requires participants to walk through their community catchment areas and map out community concerns. The mapping exercise also involves identifying key community resources, such as police stations, play parks, schools, religious facilities, and other support services, which are labelled 'green grass areas'. Participants also map out high-risk areas or areas that fuel violence and label them 'dry grass areas'. The underlying goal of this exercise is to reinforce the principle that communities are capable of identifying their own concerns and needs. The facilitator should guide them using strategic questioning but if the facilitator imposes his or her views; this may not result in identifying the real concerns of the people. Consequently, any solution that evolves from such an imposition may not work. It is critical that the facilitator develops an appreciation of community values and work from this understanding when helping communities to identify their own concerns.

**Concern Exploration:** This phase analyses and prioritizes the concerns identified in the preceding phase. During this concern exploration phase, group members are encouraged to explore the magnitude of each concern and to examine the underlying factors that led to the concern. Discussions of underlying factors assist the group in reaching consensus. Identified concerns are put through a rigorous exploration process using community-sensitive language and techniques (such as storytelling and mapping), guided by strategic questioning and listening. Exploration leads to a complex understanding of the underlying factors causing the identified concern.

**Decision-making and planning:** In this phase, communities make specific decisions for action, based on the concerns they have identified and the findings of their exploration. This is a planning phase, and communities are supported to apply the basic planning questions of 'what, how, when, where and who' to each decision made.

**Action (implementation):** Decisions taken consist of changes that must be implemented and sustained for an effective response. Action on decisions must involve as many community members as possible, so that the community assumes ownership of the process and ensures the sustainability of the solution.

**Reflection and review:** This is a facilitated reflection and review, not an evaluation, based on respect for the capacity of communities to identify their own changes and indicators of change. While reflection and review is a specific phase of the process, it is also a practice linking all the various phases of the process. Each community session should conclude with a reflection and summary of the day.

## **LESSONS LEARNT**

The success of the programme is a strong affirmation of the power and principle of community dialogue. By communities' own account, the community conversations provided safe spaces in which they could express their frustrations and hopes, where they felt heard and where they could contemplate the establishment of new relationships, unfettered by previously-held misperceptions or prejudices. On numerous occasions participants expressed the view that the profile, credibility and standing of the NMF, and its role in facilitating these dialogues, have enabled them to 'open up' and inspired a renewed hope that they can overcome their challenges and that host and migrant communities can live side by side, without fear of violence.

However, the continued concern about migrants' lack of participation in community life and the undercurrents of fear that seem to pervade all conversations, underline the reality that even in the safety of community conversations, host and migrant communities come from positions of unequal strength. In the current context of social instability and conflict, it must be recognised that migrants are faced with unique challenges and needs and in order to 'level the playing fields', there must be a much deeper understanding of their specific vulnerabilities.

It is proposed, therefore, that alongside the tool of community conversations, additional strategies and tools be used to strengthen the capacities of host community structures and formations working with migrant groups. As part of the process of building relationships, trust and sustainability, there must be an investment of time, human and financial resources in the unique and sometimes divergent capacity

development needs of migrant and host communities. This may require more focused attention to capacity development in key areas such as human rights principles and approaches; principles of participatory governance; or policies and laws relating to refugees and other categories of migrants.

Above all, in the run-up to the 2011 local government elections and the potential for growing social instability and violence, the programme should explore ways of incorporating strategies and tools that will facilitate a deeper understanding of conflict dynamics, mediation, negotiation and conflict resolution skills. The disconcerting lack of community-based strategies and mechanisms for the speedy and fair resolution of community conflicts also draws attention to the urgent need for building communities' capacities to embrace constructive alternatives and to support future strategies for the early detection and prevention of violence.

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## REFERENCES

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- <sup>i</sup> The Nelson Mandela Foundation, [www.nelsonmandela.org](http://www.nelsonmandela.org)
- <sup>ii</sup> Braulia Thillet de Solórzano, Democracy and dialogues: challenges for democracy in the XXI century.
- <sup>iii</sup> The use of the term 'migrant' follows much debate with the CCE facilitators. Some felt the term 'foreign nationals' perpetuate the notion of 'foreignness or alienness', while others felt that the terms 'non-South Africans' or 'non-nationals' have negative connotations, reminiscent of old apartheid speak. We agreed to use the broad term 'migrants' to denote inclusion of all categories of international migrants, that is, refugees, asylum seekers, economic migrants and other categories of documented or undocumented migrants.
- <sup>iv</sup> Dialogue –A Handbook for Practitioners
- <sup>v</sup> Hal Saunders of the International Institute for Sustained Dialogue and the Kettering Foundation, cited in Dialogue –A Handbook for Practitioners
- <sup>vi</sup> David Bohm. Donald Factor and Peter Garrett: Dialogue – A Proposal
- <sup>vii</sup> Hal Saunders of the International Institute for Sustained Dialogue and the Kettering Foundation, cited in Dialogue –A Handbook for Practitioners
- <sup>viii</sup> Barnes H, Conflict, Inequality and Dialogue for Conflict Resolution in Latin America: The Cases of Argentina, Bolivia and Venezuela, Prepared as a Background Paper for the UN Human Development Report 2005
- <sup>ix</sup> Ibid
- <sup>x</sup> Report by Mr. Glele-Ahanhanzo, Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, submitted pursuant to Commission on Human Rights resolution 1998/26.
- <sup>xi</sup> IRIN 10<sup>th</sup> October 2006, SOUTH AFRICA: Fleeing war, Somalis are targets of violence in adopted home, [www.irinnews.org](http://www.irinnews.org)
- <sup>xii</sup> Protest Peak in 2010, News24, 15 April 2010, [www.news24.com](http://www.news24.com)
- <sup>xiii</sup> The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, Presentation made at the Parliamentary Seminar on Migration and Xenophobia, June 2008

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<sup>xiv</sup> 'Xenophobia' is defined as the 'intense dislike or fear of strangers or people from other countries'. Though racism and xenophobia are distinct phenomena, they often overlap. While racism generally implies distinction based on difference in physical characteristics, such as skin colour, hair type, or facial features, xenophobia denotes behaviour specifically based on the perception that the other is foreign to or originates from outside the community or nation. The World Conference Against Racism, Discrimination and Other Intolerances defined *Racism* as an ideological construct that assigns a certain race and/ or ethnic group to a position of power over others on the basis of physical and cultural attributes, as well as economic wealth, involving hierarchical relations where the "superior" race exercises domination and control over others. *Xenophobia*, on the other hand, describes attitudes, prejudices and behaviour that reject, exclude and often vilify persons, based on the perception that they are outsiders or foreigners to the community, society or national identity. Sadly, while xenophobia is present in many countries, it manifests in unique and horrific ways in South Africa. The South African Human Rights Commission asserts that in the South African context, a definition of xenophobia cannot be separated from violence and physical abuse. To fully comprehend the specific and horrific manifestations of xenophobia in South Africa, the term must be reframed to incorporate *practice*. It is not merely an attitude: it is a violent activity that results in bodily harm and damage, specifically targeted at black African and Asian foreigners.

<sup>xv</sup> Throughout this report the first person, 'we', is used. This is a conscious decision intended to situate us, the Programme's Implementing Partners and authors of this series of research reports, as subjective, active participants in the process of social change. Rather than feigning any 'objectivity' through the third person, we want to acknowledge the personal transformation and learning we have and continue to experience. Our respective journeys have enabled us to shape, interpret and contribute to the ways in which the programme has unfolded.

<sup>xvi</sup> Community is defined as a heterogeneous group of people living and/or working together, sharing norms, values and concerns, with common systems and structures for leadership, problem-solving and communication.

<sup>xvii</sup> Across the 5 provinces a total of 526 respondents were sampled, with a 50% - 50% split between South African and migrant respondents.

<sup>xviii</sup> Orange Farm, Sedibeng, Siyathemba township in Balfour, Leandra, Lesilie, Oogies, Accornhoek near Bushbuckridge, Chochocho near White River in Mpumalanga, Protea-Glen, Dobsonville-Gardens in Soweto, Ennerdale in Fine Town, Reiger Park in the East Rand, Parys, Diepsloot, Atteridgeville and Mamelodi, to name a few.

<sup>xix</sup> From Democratic Dialogue –A Handbook for Practitioners