

The Imbali Rehabilitation Programme

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The social damage caused by the violence cannot be statistically estimated. When you stay in the townships or any other place affected by violence, you can see that the victims are not estimated accurately because those doing the counting do so for the sake of statistics rather than for the sake of helping clients.

Clients of the Imbali Rehabilitation Programme suffer trauma, resulting from the loss of family members, loved ones and friends. When the violence was at its height, many were left with severe emotional scars. All they thought of was revenge. In our experience at Imbali, this seems to aggravate trauma because retaliation does not bring back a lost person.

Among those who have lost their closest friends or relatives are people who do not have shelter or any means of living. In order to create a means of living, these homeless people often indulge in crime. Definitely, if a person becomes involved in crime he ends up brutalizing his own people. This in itself contributes to that person's isolation from his relatives and community.

As a result of trauma many have left school and end up without a job or any means of living. When teenagers are neither in school nor at work they expend their creative minds on other, often destructive, activities.

The Project

The Imbali Rehabilitation Programme is run by a management committee of eight, and has three additional people running sub-committees in counselling, education and dispute resolution. They do so on a voluntary basis.

The programme's counselling sub-committee helps those who have been psychologically and emotionally affected by the violence. It is known that people who have traumatic experiences need help. This help must come from people they know very well, people who can keep their concerns confidential. This helps them ventilate their feelings freely knowing very well that they have confidence in the person who is treating them.

Treatment

The counselling subcommittee of the programme has already started targeting people from the community who have counseling skills and those that can be trained in counselling. Treatment has already started among clients who need assistance desperately, that is, those who have been so adversely affected by the violence that they have reached a point in which they did not care on whom they exercise their revenge. For these people, their victims could be any member of society or people they have been working with before.

There are different ways of treating traumatized people. This can be done through the one to one method of discussion with the traumatized person. You allow the person to ventilate all that is assumed to contribute to his or her situation and try to find out the circumstances that might have led to that.

We also have group work sessions where we have discussions about things that take place generally, things that can be discussed in a group situation. This is where clients find out that they are not the only ones who have a problem of trauma and they also find out that there is room for change. It also helps them to see the need for reintegrating into the family and the society. It helps them to see that their families and society need them desperately because of the roles they have played previously.

The other method of treating traumatized people is popular theatre where the traumatized act out their own experiences. This too, helps them to ventilate.

The other important aspect is community work. This is done because community members isolate people who are abusive towards them. In order to help the community accept those clients who want to return to a normal life, it is very important to explain the causes of crime, unemployment and other abnormal factors in society and the effects of these.

Difficulties

I think it will be unfair not to mention that there are those who are very difficult to treat because of lost hope, despair and loss of trust. If they see that you keep on following them up, they even harass you with the aim of keeping you away from them. The problem is that some of the traumatized people do not see that one has to keep on approaching them until they see the need for counselling. All in all, they need the help.

One should also say that it is mostly the youth that have been affected by the violence. In most cases it is young males. It is very difficult to treat a male because of their belief that women cannot keep things confidential and because of the social subordination of women.



Ultimately, permanent results can only emerge if there is no more violence and democracy can take root. *Photo: Market Theatre Photo Workshop*

Counselling can be done effectively if the violence abates. Yet the question remains: What will happen if violence erupts again? The programme functions best in consultation with the community. Such consultations, on matters concerning the community, has attracted up to 2 000 people on a regular basis. The best time to hold such meetings is at night. However, whenever there is a major upsurge in violence in the area people are daunted from attending meetings. This, in addition to our lack full time staff, affects our work severely.

This leads me to suggest that at present we are doing temporary counselling. People are still going to engage the enemy regime in order to achieve liberation. Counselling with permanent results will only begin when the black people of South Africa are liberated.

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