

# Painful pursuit of empowerment

**APPLICATIONS** to attend a women's workshop convened by Idasa's Johannesburg office in August came from all over the Transvaal.

A variety of reasons for wanting to attend were expressed by the applicants: a woman from Kagiso who has lost her child sought ways to address the violence, a woman from a rural area wanted to inform urban women about daily raids by homeland police, women from the suburbs wanted to find out what township women were thinking and a woman from a religious order in Bophuthatswana wanted to share her concerns about the future.

As it turned out, an outbreak of violence on the East Rand made it impossible for Kagiso women to leave the township and the younger brother of one of the would-be participants from Soweto was murdered by Inkatha supporters hours before



Sisters in arms at the workshop

the workshop was due to begin.

The 20 women who gathered at a retreat centre overlooking the Hartebeespoort dam were Sotho, Zulu, Xhosa, English and Afrikaans.

The workshop aimed to facili-

tate the identification of commonalities, increase awareness of socio-political issues and encourage individual and collective empowerment.

The women were divided into groups led by volunteer facilitators from Concerned Social Workers. They were taken through a process which encouraged the identification of social forces and structures which have contributed to feelings of powerlessness.

Identification of individual and collective resources was encouraged, along with reflection on how these can best be employed in restructuring South African society.

In a creative expression exercise half way through the workshop, the women gave vent to their anger, despair and confusion. However, there was a recognition that the birth of a new society, like the birth of a child, is inevitably a painful process and the support which is given and received by women can sustain and strengthen all that is positive in the process of change.

Melody Emmett  
Regional Co-ordinator

## A night in Duncan Village

By Steve Anderson

**WE MET** Sindiso for the first time on Friday evening, August 31. He had not planned to be part of the Idasa/Koinonia encounter, but had come to the Gompo Town Hall in Duncan Village, East London, after hearing about the programme

through the grapevine.

There he was, buzzing around the hall, desperately trying to find someone he could host for the night. A little while later he was ushering my wife, Marion, and me into his home and introducing us to his two daughters and his wife, Cecilia.

Sindiso's home was one of

eight on a piece of land the size of the smallest plot I have seen in the white suburbs.

There was only one room, about 3,5m by 3m, one door and no windows. He referred to it as his "shack" and that's what it was: a structure made of wood, with cardboard on the inside for extra insulation and to keep out

the rain. There was a mattress on the floor upon which we sat and chatted, careful not to disturb his three-year-old daughter sleeping at the one end.

While Marion chatted to Cecilia, who had started to boil a kettle on a paraffin cooker and to cut bread for our supper, Sindiso took me to meet a few of his friends, Mzimkulu, Bongane and Lungela.

"You know, Steve," said Mzimkulu with a smile, "you know we are going to write this into our history books because you are the first white man to walk through this door."

Marion and I slept little that night. The slice of bread and cup of tea we'd had for supper was less than we were used to and we were hungry. The cardboard-covered ground was hard and - in stark contrast to the attitude of our hosts - rather unfriendly; the smell of paraffin made us light-headed and nauseous.

Sometime late that night, with the sound of the neighbour's radio playing, my eyes closed and I slept.

Thank you Koinonia, Idasa and Sindiso for a life-transforming experience.

Steve Anderson is a teacher and was one of 25 whites who took part in the weekend encounter.

## Life brighter in Rio slums

**DURING** our brief visit to Brazil and Peru we were particularly interested in the housing situation in the two countries.

Rio de Janeiro is a modern, vibrant metropolis of 10 million people with its share of dilapidated buildings and even ruins downtown, but it was not the slum I anticipated and not as depressing as our townships.

Slums, or *favelas*, are located in and around the wealthier suburbs of Rio, the largest, Rocincho, being only about 100 metres away from the Sheraton Hotel and one of Rio's upmarket

I was pleasantly surprised with the standard of housing in the favelas. Most are built of red bricks and tin shanties are the exception. Many of the houses have steel (and even some aluminium) window and door

An Idasa staffer in Johannesburg, Marianne Hölscher, recently had the opportunity to attend the annual conference of the American Political Science Association in San Francisco. On her way there, she spent several days in South America. Here are some of her impressions:

frames. Judging by all the television antennas and illegal link-ups to street lights, many favela houses are electrified. The biggest everyday problems facing favela dwellers are sewerage and refuse removal and mud slides.

What struck me most was the apparent existence of a truly

integrated Brazilian nation - a successful mix of Portuguese colonists, black slaves and native South Americans.

North of the border, democracy was prodded, scrutinised, pondered and analysed for four days by more than 3 000 political scientists in San Francisco.

Capitalists gloated and socialists were conspicuous by their absence. Where they did show up to make a last ditch stand, they fought a losing battle against overwhelming odds.

Surprising to me was the lack of factual information about recent developments in Eastern Europe. The rapid pace and intensity of events there had caught even experts by surprise.

It was clear that democracy still remains an enigma, but that definite trends towards global democratisation exist.



## Treacherous terrain

*It seemed to me that this was really our central problem. We had yet to come to terms with Africa, and doing so was not going to be easy. I mean, how do you come to terms with something you don't really understand? - Rian Malan in My Traitor's Heart.*

**JUST AS** South Africa is not an easy place for Rian Malan to come to terms with, *My Traitor's Heart* was not an easy book for the East London reading group. The people who met to discuss it all acknowledged a sense of recognition — of the uncertainty, guilt and fear Malan expresses. He is merely more honest than most.

The tales of murder and violence recounted by Malan are, to say the least, disturbing. The language he uses reflects this: "South Africa calls for strong and sickening words. It has a way of making your brain seethe and your blood boil. South Africans develop antibodies to the poison, they grow numb and blind, but if you leave long enough to detoxify and come back with clear eyes, your



Rian Malan

skull gets fractured. You see too much, and it makes you sick."

The discussion centred very much around personal responses to the book. This necessarily led to talk about the current levels of violence in the country. Somehow the tone was not very hopeful. The South Africa of today does not look much different from the South Africa of the novel.

The solution Malan offers was not received with much confidence by the group. In the words of Creina Alcock, a character the novel who today still lives in Msinga: "You said one could be deformed by this country, and yet it seems to me one can only be deformed by the things one does to oneself. It's not the outside things that deform you, it's the choices you make. To live anywhere in the world, you must know how to live in Africa. The only thing you can do is love, because it is the only thing that leaves light inside you, instead of the total, obliterating darkness."

Bea Roberts

## Lights, camera . . . action

**THE FIRST** "shoot" of Idasa's video-in-the-making on democracy got under way on the banks of the Breede River near Swellendam on a weekend early in September.

Top billing went to 20 pupils from English, Afrikaans, "coloured" and black schools around Cape Town who were to explore a range of values and attitudes through simulation exercises facilitated by two education specialists.

As the camera and sound crew beamed their lights and focused their lenses on the impromptu "actors", the children continued their discussions unperturbed, blissfully unaware of the activity around them.

The exercises varied from listening to trust-building and the benefits of co-operation. The climax came on Sunday morning

during an exercise about power and wealth which brought out (some surprisingly) cut-throat, competitive and ruthless behaviour in virtually all the participants. At one stage tempers raged high as a small group — in the position of the "elite" through sheer chance — attempted to retain control at the expense of the rest.

All knowledge and memory of exercises that had fostered democratic consultation and co-operation in earlier stages of the weekend were forgotten as the students vied for power and the opportunity of pocketing a share of the coins used in the "game".

In the de-briefing session, the implications of their actions started to come home to them. "We were so busy trying to stay in the elite and get the money that we forgot about each other's needs and wants," one boy said.

Video director Dermot Judge was delighted with the footage. His greatest battle during the weekend was to stop his camera crew from using all the video tape in one go — so taken were they with the responses of the students.

It is hoped that F W de Klerk, Nelson Mandela, some leading industrialists and unionists will be next on the filming schedule.

Whoever it is, the pupils' will be a tough act to follow!

Sue Valentine  
Media Co-ordinator



Pupils discuss the nuts and bolts of democracy while the cameras roll.

## Cosas and white pupils meet in PE

**PUPILS** from Alexander Road High School and the Congress of South African Students (Cosas) met in Port Elizabeth in September to debate the implications of open schools.

The three-member teams comprised both Cosas and Alexander Road pupils and the debate was attended by about 500 enthusiastic pupils. A prefect at Alexander Road, Brent Henegan, chaired the meeting.

The issues included the standard of education, language and culture, discipline, overcrowded classrooms and transport.

Those opposed to the opening of schools argued that the stan-

dard of education in the white community would drop because black pupils cannot afford to pay the same school fees as their white counterparts, resulting in poor quality facilities and staff.

Education should be integrated only once the standard of education of blacks and whites was equal, they argued.

Tension was also likely when black pupils, with their experience of Student Representative Councils (SRC), encountered the more hierarchical prefect system prevalent in many white schools.

Those arguing against integration added that overcrowding in black schools could never be alleviated by white schools

opening their doors to black pupils. Unless white schools were enlarged they would be unable to accommodate prospective black pupils. However, the financial constraints on the Department of Education and Culture made this unlikely.

The bussing of pupils to white schools was likely to become a reality and transport costs for black families could well be prohibitive.

The team arguing in favour of open schools called for one education department.

Integration would not mean an end to differences in language and culture. The different cultural backgrounds could cause

serious setbacks. Programmes encouraging an acceptance and understanding of different cultures could help to overcome this.

The floor challenged those who argued for integration to come up with clear measures to cope with the consequences of stayaways, boycotts and violence spreading to the white community. The response was that the struggle was disciplined.

Violence is not on the political agenda, but it does erupt spontaneously and in ambiguous circumstances.

Max Mamase  
Regional Director



## 'Hold together' tours upgraded

**THE** Durban office of Idasa recently improved the quality and availability of its township tour programme in order to service the training needs of companies in the region. The Bambanani township tour is now run by Shelley Gielink of Third Eye Tours on a full-time agency basis.

"Bambanani", which means "hold together", captures something of the spirit that the programme aims to foster in the city. It is available to anyone, although it is specifically designed for companies because it can feed into ongoing in-house sensitisation and awareness programmes. The business environment is the place where people

of all races and social backgrounds are rubbing shoulders on a daily basis.

The tour programme can also facilitate better management of people by enabling white and Indian management and supervisory staff to better understand the home environment of the people they deal with daily. This is essential where these levels of staff are seeking to encourage greater creativity and productivity in workers.

It is a fact of human nature that people's creative and productive capacities cannot improve before their basic needs of food, sleep, safety and recreation are satisfied. The townships and informal settlements

are depressingly deficient in these respects.

The route commentaries on the tour contain a wealth of intensively researched information and the tour also offers the chance to speak to people in these communities. There is a stop in Inanda at the Bambayi shack settlement, on the site of the farm once owned by Gandhi. Other stops can be made on request, for instance to interview owners of spaza shops or transport operators.

Further details and tour brochures are available from Idasa at (031) 304-8893 or directly from Shelley Gielink at (031) 21-2771.



Tour leader Shelley Gielink in one of Durban's townships.

## No relief for people of KwaMakuta

**VIOLENCE** has devastated the lives of thousands of people in Natal, but few communities have experienced as complete a breakdown of law and order as the community living in KwaMakutha, a township just inland from Amanzimtoti on the South Coast.

This township is part of KwaZulu and as such falls under the jurisdiction of the KwaZulu

police force. During the past year, the actions of certain members of this police force were described as a "reign of terror". In April, Joseph Kabanyane, a KwaMakutha resident and member of the SAP since 1958, was one of six applicants who sought a Supreme Court interdict restraining the KwaZulu police from unlawful harassment.

In his words, these policemen "have through their conduct in

attacking and shooting residents at random and for no apparent reason, shown themselves to be highly reckless and a real danger to the livelihood and well-being of local residents".

An interdict was granted by Justice Broome on April 12, and it was subsequently broadened by Mr Justice Bristow in June to include an interim interdict protecting not only the six original applicants, but "all persons in

KwaMakutha", from unlawful harassment, or assault by the KwaZulu police (this is, apparently, only the second time in South African history that such a "class" interdict has been granted).

In spite of these interdicts, Idasa's Community Conflict Monitoring Service and human rights attorneys are inundated by a steady stream of people from KwaMakutha alleging violence against them by vigilante groups, which they say include members of the KwaZulu police. In many instances these police officers have been identified by name.

An element of the problem appears to be that the community hall in the township has become the home of Inkatha refugees from violence, as well as accommodating a section of the local KwaZulu police force.

The grievances of these refugees may be feeding a dynamic whereby individuals, possibly including some policemen, are engaging in a vendetta against the rest of the community.

The complexities mean that interdicts alone are not going to bring peace to the community. The political nature of the problem calls for a more comprehensive peace accord similar to those negotiated in other parts of the province. Without this, the monitors, the police and the courts have no prospect of success and the tragic spiral of violence and counter-violence has no end in sight.

## NP 'smelling of roses'

**THE** only organisation in South Africa "smelling of roses" at the moment is, irony of ironies, the National Party.

This was the view expressed by Idasa director of policy and planning Dr Van Zyl Slabbert in a hard-hitting address at the end of the Five Freedoms Forum conference on negotiations in Johannesburg in August.

He criticised the failure of organisations opposed to apartheid to co-operate in creating a united front. In the context of ongoing violence, this created the impression that the only organisation working effectively for a non-racial democracy in South Africa was the National Party.

The conference itself could be criticised on this basis in that it ended without agreement on a process for the future. What was encouraging, though, was that a number of delegates called on the Five Freedoms Forum, or any other organisation to organise

further conferences or workshops/seminars on some of the critical issues raised.

These included school education, a future economic system, urbanisation, local government, and the civil service - or "public administration in the new South Africa", as it was called.

The conference began with keynote addresses from Mr Thabo Mbeki of the ANC and Dr Oscar Dhlomo of the Institute for a Multi-Party Democracy. The aim of these opening addresses was for the two leaders to spell out the negotiation options but both speakers failed to address any real issues, perhaps for understandable reasons.

An excellent panel discussion on negotiations followed, with speakers including Dr Pallo Jordan of the ANC, Democratic Party leader Dr Zach de Beer, Mr Essop Pahad of the South African Communist Party, Labour Party member Mr Miley Richards and Mr Frank Mdlalose of

the Inkatha Freedom Party.

The panel were required to answer questions, for example, who should participate in negotiations, what issues should be negotiated and who governs during negotiations?

There was no real disagreement on the first two questions, but the form of interim government raised some interesting debate and discussion, from the panel as well as the floor.

Delegates then had the difficult task of choosing to participate in two out of 18 different commissions, ranging from school education to sport to the transformation of our cultural institutions.

The commission on violence, led to heated debate between members of the ANC and Inkatha. The commission on education, on the other hand, led almost to a feeling of despair at the magnitude of the problem.

David Screen  
National Director