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Building Cultural Synergy and Peace in South Africa

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"The collective challenge in communities is not what to do, but what to be."

As a community development worker, I have been trying for many years to relate my professional knowledge of non-violent social change processes to the issue of war-peace. Eileen Youngusband put this issue within the context of the rapid and almost universal social change resulting from the technological innovations of the last century:

"The latter greatly increased man's muscle and thinking capacity, but we have found no such means to enlarge his heart, and...this widening imbalance in man's development means that the benefits conferred by his mind may be negated by the infantile and uncivilised responses of his emotions" (Chetkow-Yanoov, 1985).

My focus on war and peace starts with the assumption that the people-centred service disciplines are capable of reducing the gap between contemporary scientific technology and social immaturity. We all understand that being militarily powerful, or winning wars, is not enough to guarantee peace. I firmly believe that material wealth, beyond a decent standard, will not make for well-being. Although these ideas are reasonably well-known in professional circles, I as a South African, have experienced a growing urgency to share them with other audiences.

In modern industrial societies, and increasingly in the rest of the world, the economy is regarded as the single most important aspect of public policy. To my mind the economy has also been separated conceptually from the ethical, social and ecological aspects of life. It is regarded as a large machine that generates the good life of increasing consumption more or less independently of the society of which it is a part. With the economical dimension supreme, it is no surprise that a prime characteristic of the modern world is the destruction of *"social and ecological values,"* and the wealth to which they give rise. *"Industrial humanity is behaving like King Midas, who turned his daughter to gold before he realised the limitations of this conception of wealth"* (Ekins, 1992).

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The vision informing this collection of papers is peace-building and community development. This vision links very well with the goals and objectives of the long-run vision of the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy of the South African Government. As South Africa moves toward the next century, it seeks:

- a competitive, fast-growing economy which creates sufficient jobs for all work seekers;
- a redistribution of income and opportunities in favour of the poor;
- a society in which sound health, education and other services are available to all; and
- an environment in which homes are secure and places of work are productive.

This strategy for rebuilding and restructuring the economy is in keeping with the goals set out in the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). In the context of this integrated economic strategy, it should be possible successfully to confront the related challenges of meeting basic needs, developing human resources, increasing participation in the democratic institutions of civil society and implementing the RDP in all its facets.

Patrick FitzGerald and colleagues (1995) remind us that in the past the development debate was dominated by modernisation, underdevelopment and dependency theories. This context was prominently reflected in the literature on South Africa in the 1960s and 1970s. In the 1980s this debate itself fell out of the frame to a significant extent as attention was focused on the escalating liberation struggle and the increasing degree of repression that it produced.

Nothing better illustrates the economisation of human existence than the concept of development. Not only was development defined as economic development, it also provided a single scale, with industrial countries at the top, against which the diversity of human culture could henceforth be evaluated. Whole societies, many with rich and varied histories, were classified as 'underdeveloped,' and then 'developing' so that in the course of time they could become 'developed' as epitomised by a famous country (*ibid*).

A different way of defining development would be to include the following five key distinctive elements:

1. "Another development" is oriented toward satisfying people's fundamental human needs;
2. It is a development enacted by the people concerned, on the basis of their own knowledge, experience and culture, rather than being imposed from outside;
3. It is a self-reliant development achieved largely through the mobilisation of local resources to meet perceived local needs;

4. It is ecologically sound;
5. It cannot be achieved without fundamental reform, both of domestic power relations and international development institutions (Ekins, 1992).

“Development’ in this context is defined as a process of the society toward the goals it itself has set. Wealth is what makes this development possible. This kind of wealth does not reject neither money nor goods, but it will embed them in a broad context acknowledging the rich diversity of human experience and the fact that money can contribute only to part of it. It will put the Midas touch at the service of a humanity that also knows how to value the human spirit, the bonds of community, and the other forms of life on earth (Ekins, 1992).

According to Ekins, the key to achieving these five components is a phenomenon that has been extensively discussed: the rise of people’s organisations which increasingly are forming networks across the East-West and North-South divide. Side-by-side with these people’s organisation networks, an increasingly coherent body of theory and practice is growing to address the inequities of the trading system and Third World indebtedness.

In South Africa, in the early 1990s, the spotlight turned towards a negotiated transition and slowly the development debate began to emerge once again, but this time in a significantly different global political context in which the socialist block had fragmented and with it, all viable radical anti-market options. The previous theoretical development debate had grown increasingly removed from what was happening on the ground and did not provide many useful tools for those who wished not simply to discuss development theories, but rather were involved with how to implement good development practice.

The development theory debate had essentially swallowed itself up. Newly-industrialising countries founded their high rate of growth neither on neo-classical modernisation, nor on dependency theories. Those still looking for handy meta-theories are discovering that there is not a great deal to guide their practice. Pragmatic consensus is replacing the old style theoretical contests.

“What is now emerging is a different kind of consensus which is centring on the notions of sustainability. In South Africa, we chose to move beyond a narrow, albeit important, concern with economic growth per se, and to consider the quality of that growth, through our Reconstruction and Development Programme which guides the development policy process in the new South Africa” (FitzGerald, et al, 1995).

Sustainable development lies at the very heart of South Africa's RDP as it places the satisfying of basic needs at the centre of the agenda of the growth process itself. Through this process we hope to ensure that people's basic needs can be met, that the resource base is maintained, that there is a sustainable population level, that environment and cross-sectoral concerns are integrated into decision-making processes, and that communities are empowered.

In South Africa, sustainable development links formerly separate discourses and asks different kinds of questions. *"It is the truth commission in the development debate"* (FitzGerald, 1995). Although there may be general agreement concerning the goal of sustainable development, there remain significant differences concerning how best this might be achieved. Sustainable development is not something that can happen effortlessly. It requires, amongst other things, an enormous educational effort so that citizens are made aware of the need to manage resources wisely to achieve the maximum benefits at the minimum cost, not only to fulfill their own needs today, but those of their children tomorrow and of future generations. It is a concept which is in harmony with deep-seated African cultural values concerning the continuity of the dead, the living and the yet unborn.

Asking the question *"Is this sustainable?"* leads us to search out those costs identified with existing pathways and in particular to identify where human and natural resource conflicts – actual and potential – may lie. If exploring the causes of conflict represents one side of the coin, discovering the opportunities for development is the other side. Bremner & Visser (1995) alerted us already in their study of negotiation, conflict resolution and human needs as a solution for sustainable development, that development and conflict are similar, in that both concern the struggle over power and resources. Experiences in the first half of the 1990s taught South Africans that while development initiatives are rightfully posed as a means to overcome conflict by tackling the poverty and misery on which it breeds, the delivery of resources, if not handled properly, can intensify conflict situations and lay waste development efforts.

In Africa, peace and conflict management is becoming a major priority of several Platforms of Action, which is reflecting the awareness that human progress and development cannot be achieved without peace and gender equality. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) jointly organised a Women's Leadership Forum on Peace in Johannesburg in 1996. The meeting was convened to study a proposal on terms of reference for an African Women's Committee on Peace as recommended by the Kampala Action Plan. This was followed by the Pan-African Conference on Peace, Gender and Development in Kigali in March 1997, organised by the women of Rwanda under the auspices of these two institutions. The conference adopted a Plan of Action which aimed at further involving governmental and non-governmental

organisations, peace movements, civil society and the international community in building justice and a culture of peace. It sought to encourage good governance and the establishing of early-warning mechanisms for preventing the outbreak of conflicts, rehabilitating those affected by conflict and extraditing the perpetrators of crimes against humanity.

Recently, these recommendations were endorsed by the Africa Regional Coordinating Committee for the Integration of Women in Development (ARCC) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. In line with the decision taken in Beijing by the African First Ladies, to get further involved in humanitarian and conflict-management issues in Africa, the first lady of Nigeria organised a peace summit of African First Ladies in May 1997. It is imperative that all of us familiarise ourselves with these developments as peace concerns everyone in the world and it behoves each country to follow up the implementation of the recommendations of these conferences and to integrate them into their framework of action plans for community development workers.

Visser & Bremner (1995) argue that a war on poverty may in fact feed the warriors. We need to take note of the fact that on the broad societal level, the economy will be shaped to join the global system with full effect and we, as participants to development, will have to consider if the frameworks we set ourselves to develop will indeed provide the nations of the world with the material goods necessary to allow for nation-building, reconciliation and peace. In South Africa, we are convinced that neither the GEAR, nor the RDP, can simply deliver 'development.' The key lies within a community with its own perception of its circumstances and needs. Development occurs inside people; they have to learn to 'deliver' their own development, ie, to become self-reliant and to avoid feeding the poverty warriors. Hope & Timmel (1984) illustrate the different approaches to poverty with the following matrix (see Figure 1 over):

Human well-being depends on much more than producing and consuming things valued in the market place. Good health, satisfying work, a sense of community, freedom of expression, equal opportunity, and a healthy environment shape overall welfare as much as income does, often more so. Helping us to see and understand wealth in its many dimensions and how we might begin to measure it better, it becomes clear that the policy-makers and academics in community development, for too long, were dealing with the 'what' of the concept. Are we really wanting to take over the role of the people's organisations and the communities in defining what they mean by community development? I believe that communities know how to define community development in their own terms. Let us rather start to involve ourselves in the 'how' of community development and its many dimensions so that we might begin to understand how to measure the results of this complex process and develop a single unit of measurement.

Figure 1: Approaches to Poverty

	1	2	3	4
A Causes of the problem	Circumstances beyond the control of people. Natural Disasters, bad luck	Lack of education Lack of resources, causing low standards of living, inadequate technology	Exploitation, domination, oppression, alienation	Inadequate structures and values
B. Goals	To relieve suffering	To raise production To provide technical skills To develop self-reliance	To challenge and overcome oppressive and exploitative structures	To develop a new culture and build alternative economic, political, legal and education structures
C. Service programs	Famine relief Refugee centres Care for disabled and aged Child Care, clinics for curative medicine 'give a fish'	Technical training in agriculture and in health care. Income producing activities. Home industries, savings and credit societies 'teach fishing'	Trade unions political parties and movements Conscientization 'Access to fishing pond'	Conscientization, Alternative structures, Cooperatives, workers councils, cultural programs, new forms of Education and management 'sustainability'
D. Types of change	FUNCTIONAL CHANGE * _____ * non-conflictual models		Conflict STRUCTURAL CHANGE Conflict * _____ * Management Conflictual Models Resolution	
E. Types of leadership	Strong reliance on Authority	Consultative	Shared but delegation of authority from the base up	Animation: Enabling, Participatory, Shared responsibility
F. Inspiration	Charity Help the poor <i>I was hungry and you gave me to eat</i> Matt. 25	Help the people to help themselves Vatikan 11 <i>Gaudium et Spes</i> <i>Do unto others as you would have them do unto you</i> Matt. 7:12	Liberation Theology Denouncing Evil Announcing Good <i>Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for what is right...</i> Matt 5.6	A new relationship between all people and with the Earth <i>Behold I make all things new</i> Rev. 21:5
G. Type of service	WELFARE PEACE-LOVING	DEVELOPMENT PEACE-KEEPING	LIBERATION PEACE-MAKING	TRANSFORMATION PEACE-BUILDING

Source: Hope & Timmel (1984)

The Human Scale Network in South Africa was involved in a case study in northern and eastern communities. Bremner & Visser (1995) explain that the human needs theory, used as the basis for a theory of conflict resolution defines "*deep-rooted conflict*" as that situation which exists when the satisfaction of fundamental human needs is denied in an institutionalised way within a community, society or other social system. Another way of saying the same thing is that the social structures and institutions are dysfunctional with regard to satisfying people's needs.

Through a combination of facilitated workshops and fieldwork in each community, structures are being designed and implemented for the creative management of conflict, and development on a human scale. The objectives of the project include:

- enabling each community to take the lead in controlling development initiatives, including those associated with the RDP;
- integrating the acquisition of material needs satisfiers (health clinics, paved roads, etc) with growing awareness of non material needs and processes – gaining a Human Scale Development framework for community decision-making and prioritisation;
- ongoing conflict-handling, negotiation skills and problem-solving skills workshops;
- increasing self-reliance by incremental community take-over of project processes and responsibilities.

In the system of fundamental human needs, developed by Max-Neef (1992), the needs are objective: unchanging, universal and classifiable. It is the means by which these needs are satisfied, their satisfiers, that vary over time between communities, cultures, and between individuals. Moreover, each need has satisfiers relating to the four modes of human experience: **being**, **doing**, **having** and **interacting**. The needs and their modes of satisfaction can be represented by a 36-square matrix (see Figure 2 over).

Each square contains the satisfiers that relate a particular need to a mode of satisfaction. The **being** column registers personal or collective attributes; **having** registers institutions, norms, mechanisms; the **doing** column registers actions; and **interacting** registers relationships in space or time. Relatively few of the satisfiers can be appropriately provided by money or ownership of things, except insofar as these lead to higher levels of personal or social development. Emphasising money and material things are likely to inhibit need satisfaction in most of the boxes of the matrix.

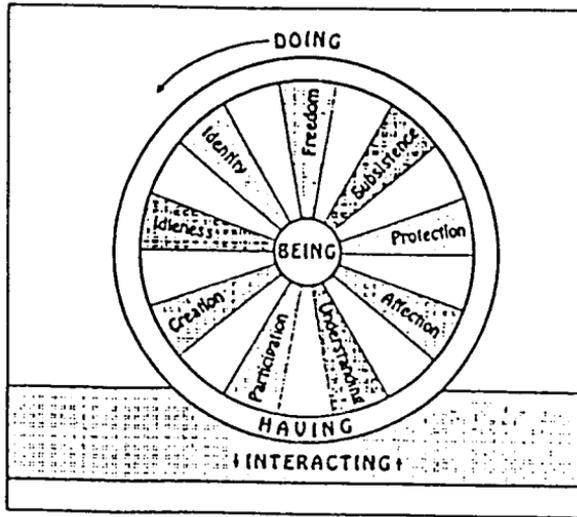
Figure 2: Needs and their Modes of Satisfaction

	BEING	HAVING	DOING	INTERACTING
subsistence	1 physical health, mental health equilibrium, sense of humour, adaptability	2 food, shelter, work	3 feed, procreate, rest, work	4 living environment social setting
protection	5 care, adaptability autonomy equilibrium, solidarity	6 insurance systems, savings, social security, health systems rights family work	7 cooperate, prevent, plan take care of cure, help	living space, social environment, dwelling
affection	9 self-esteem, determination generosity receptiveness, passion, sensuality, sense of humor, tolerance solidarity, respect	10 friendship, family partnerships, relationships with nature	11. Make love, caress, express emotions, share, take care of, cultivate, appreciate	12. Privacy, intimacy, home, spaces of togetherness
understanding	13 critical conscience, receptiveness, curiosity, astonishment, discipline, intuition, rationality	14 literature, teachers, method, educational policies, communication policies	15 investigate, study, experiment, educate, analyse meditate	16 Settings of formative interaction, schools universities academies, groups communities, family
participation	17 adaptability, receptiveness, solidarity, willingness, determination, dedication, respect, passion, sense of humour	18 rights, responsibilities, duties privileges, work	19 become affiliated, cooperate, prose share, dissent, obey interact, agree on express opinions	20 settings of participative interaction, parties, associations, churches, communities, neighbourhoods family
creation	21 passion, determination intuition, imagination, boldness, rationality inventiveness, autonomy, curiosity	22 abilities, skills, method, work	23 work, invent, build design compose interpret	24 Productive and feedback settings, workshops, cultural groups audiences spaces for expression temporal freedom
recreation	25 curiosity, sense of humour, receptiveness imagination recklessness tranquilly, sensuality	26 games, spectacles, clubs parties, peace of mind	27 daydream, brood dream recall old times, give way to fantasies, remember, relax have fun, play	28 privacy, intimacy, spaces of closeness, free time surroundings, landscapes
identity	29 sense of belonging, consistency, differentiation, self-esteem, assertiveness	30 symbols, language, religion, habits customs, reference groups, sexuality, values, norms, historical memory work	31 commit oneself, integrate oneself, confront, decide on get to know oneself, recognize oneself, actualize oneself grow	32 social rhythms, everyday settings, setting to which one belongs, maturation stages
freedom	33 autonomy, self-esteem, determination, passion assertiveness, open mindedness, boldness, rebelliousness, tolerance	34 equal rights	35 dissent, choose, be different from, run risks, develop awareness, commit oneself, disobey	36 temporal/spatial plasticity

Source: Max-Neef (1992)

Max-Neef (1992) makes it clear that unsatisfied human needs create poverties and pathologies. He postulates that every unsatisfied need presents therefore another kind of poverty. For the case studies in South Africa, Anne Hope (Clarke, 1993) adjusted this matrix in the following manner:

Figure 3: Wheel of Needs and Satisfiers



Her wheel of needs and satisfiers relates to the nine fundamental human needs and to the four ways in which they can be satisfied.

In pursuit of peace in South Africa, note should also be taken of the research done by Elizur, *et al* (1984). They consider values as desirable states, objects or behaviours serving as normative standards to judge and to choose among alternative modes of behaviour. Their studies strive to examine the relative importance of value items and to analyse the structure of the domain for samples from various cultural environments. A facet definition of work and life values was suggested, that provided guidelines for constructing a Value Questionnaire and the formulation of hypotheses regarding the structure of relationships among components of values. In terms of the issue of cultural differences the results indicated the presence of cultural differences in the rating of a limited number of specific values. They obtained essentially the same structure in eight independent samples which lend substantial support to the definitional framework of values suggested.

Elixir (1991) identified the following lists of life and work values in his research which may stimulate debate in this regard:

Figure 4: Life and Work Values

1. Meaningful life	Meaningful work
2. Self fulfilment	Self fulfilment in work
3. Contribution to society	Contribution to society
4. Happiness	Happiness at work
5. Love	Good human relations at work
6. Friendship	Friendship at work
7. Quality of life	Quality of work life
8. Economic security	Job security
9. Success in life	Success in work
10. Doing interesting things	Doing interesting work
11. Being responsible	Being responsible for work
12. Being independent	Being independent in work
13. Feeling satisfied with life	Feeling satisfied with work
14. Recognition of what I do	Recognition for performance
15. Having good friends	Having friends at work
16. Comfortable living	Comfortable work conditions
17. Being healthy	Safety at work
18. Having money	Receiving a high salary

The case studies referred to earlier remind one that the quest of community development facilitators working in communities, is to find and understand each other by accepting their cultural differences and by focusing on their similarities, as well as by negotiating a shared agenda which may lead to a sense of shared purpose. This will assist us to develop a sense of shared destiny and peace-building which will facilitate our collective inspiration and positive spirit. *The collective challenge in communities is not what to do but what to be.* The key strategic challenge for communities is to appreciate who they are in order to discover what they can become.

Motshabi (1993) warns us that it is not profitable to identify difference for its sake only. What really counts is to identify the differences that matter, while assigning the others their proper role. *We are concerned with difference because, like similarity, it affects the quality of interaction between human beings.* Although it may be good to emphasise commonality, it is naive to pursue a false consensus based on an artificial uniformity.

Integration, which is preferable, requires "...an environment catering to the full expression of the self, in a situation that is freely changing in reaction to the needs of all participants" (Biko, 1978:24). This implies a process in which people

negotiate and define a set of symbols which transcends and incorporates particular cultures to create a larger whole. Such a process is fundamental to the notion of synergy.

The construction of an inclusive culture implies some knowledge of all cultural material in the country. For this reason, we must study the substantive cultural postulates of all South Africans. This should help people to enter each other's worlds and to share the symbols that underlie their different ways of life. So, too, it should facilitate freer movement between the different cultures and thus reveal the real and exciting prospect of true multi-culturalism. The structures we create should draw from many world views and provide a comfortable milieu for all people. We need not create a comprehensive culture with no internal contradictions. Our challenge is to build a culture that expresses the authenticity of each person and one that humanises all people, especially those who have been trampled in the past.

In our efforts at building synergy, it is fair to say that the creation of cultural synergy requires a re-evaluation of the assumptions underlying our disparate value systems. Motshabi (1993) emphasises that this must be done in a non-judgmental manner. What follows is a brief, impressionistic indication of some of the questions that Motshabi asks. Concerning cuisine, one may pose questions about why some people have tea at four o'clock. The practice is, for many, a self-evident part of daily life. Indeed, there is no saying that the practice is wrong and should be jettisoned. It is to say that it is not profitable to reflect on its purpose. If its purpose proves hard to articulate, we might take a more relaxed attitude to its observance. We might change the beverage or the time and even discover that there never was such a thing as high tea.

"The questions raised are essentially about liberating our full human potential. And in this lies the power of a synergy of culture. And yet, still, we may rediscover an unflagging commitment to its strict observance"
(Motshabi, 1993).

In South Africa we believe that *ubuntu* will assist us to forge trust between management and labour, political, religious, cultural and tribal groups as well as between various racial groups. This forms the heart of the ancient African solidarity philosophy of *ubuntu* which, literally translated, means "*I am because we are.*" In other words, we cannot pick up a grain of rice unless we use at least two fingers. It is in this regard one may ask what the relevance of the wisdom of *ubuntu* is in the age of global competitiveness? Archbishop Desmond Tutu defines the possible contribution of *ubuntu* more precisely:

"Africans have a thing called ubuntu; it is about the essence of being human, it is part of the gift that Africa will give the world. It embraces hospitality, caring about others, being willing to go that extra mile for the sake of others. We believe a person is a person through another person, that my humanity is caught up, bound up and is inextricable in yours. When I dehumanise you, I inexorably dehumanise myself. The solitary human being is a contradiction in terms and, therefore, you seek to work for the common good because your humanity comes into its own community, in belonging."

In conclusion the following six core principles of *ubuntu* as formulated by Mbigi (1997) are noteworthy:

- unconditional acceptance;
- unconditional respect;
- unconditional human dignity;
- unconditional compassion;
- unconditional hospitality;
- unconditional stewardship.

The values of *ubuntu* will assist to canonise a people-centred orientation and empowerment in global communities. South Africans believe it is these values that will help communities to make sure that projects are successful and will guide community development workers to establish structures, mechanisms and organisations that are conducive to peace building.

The principal conclusion is that humanity will not achieve sustainability, equity, harmony, or happiness, while growth, measured only by GNP, remains the only economic objective. This does not mean that the new objective should be no growth, which is, in principle, equally compatible with unsustainability and injustice. It means the progressive bounding of economic activity by tight sustainability constraints, and the explicit direction of that activity by and toward positive human values: personal development and quality of life, participation in society, democracy, and justice; and the monitoring of economic performance according to these goals. For poor nations, achievement of these goals requires significant production growth; for rich nations, it does not. Should technological change, driven by people-centered values in transition to a largely global economy, manage to achieve it, however, it would be a welcome benefit. There is a memorable 'wise saying': *"Who is the greatest hero? He who converts his enemy into his friend"* (Avot D'Rabbi Nathan).

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