

The Process of Reconciliation

LUC HUYSE

Reconciliation means different things to different people. Its significance varies from culture to culture, and changes with the passage of time. To get a grip on the concept, the Handbook poses four basic questions:

- What?
- Who?
- How?
- When?

2.1 What is Reconciliation?

2.1.1 Ideally

Ideally reconciliation prevents, once and for all, the use of the past as the seed of renewed conflict. It consolidates peace, breaks the cycle of violence and strengthens newly established or reintroduced democratic institutions.

As a backward-looking operation, reconciliation brings about the personal healing of survivors, the reparation of past injustices, the building or rebuilding of non-violent relationships between individuals and communities, and the acceptance by the former parties to a conflict of a common vision and understanding of the past. In its forward-looking dimension, reconciliation means enabling victims and perpetrators to get on with life and, at the level of society, the establishment of a civilized political dialogue and an adequate sharing of power.

2.1.2 In Practice

In practice such all-encompassing reconciliation is not easy to realize. The experience of a brutal past makes the search for peaceful coexistence a delicate and intricate operation. Reconciliation is not an isolated act, but a constant readiness to leave the tyranny of violence and fear behind. It is not an event but a process, and as such usually a difficult, long and unpredictable one, involving various steps and stages. Each move demands changes in attitudes (e.g., tolerance instead of revenge), in conduct (e.g., joint commemoration of all the dead instead of separate, partisan memorials) and in the institutional environment (e.g., integrating the war veterans of both sides into one national army instead of keeping ex-combatants in quasi-private militias). Above all, the approach must be that every step counts, that every effort has value, and that in this delicate domain even a small improvement is significant progress.

There is a certain danger in talking about reconciliation in terms of strict sequences. The process is not a linear one. At each stage a relapse back into more violent means of dealing with conflicts is always a real possibility. And the stages do not always follow logically after each other in any set order. Nonetheless, they remain essential ingredients for lasting reconciliation.

Three Stages

Stage 1. Replacing Fear by Non-Violent Coexistence

When the shooting stops, the first step away from hatred, hostility and bitterness is the achievement

of non-violent coexistence between the antagonist individuals and groups.

This means at a minimum looking for alternatives to revenge. A South African observer, Charles Villa-Vicencio, writes: "At the lowest level coexistence implies no more than a willingness not to kill one another - a case of walking by on the other side of the street". For some the basis for this step will be war-weariness or the simple but realistic conclusion that killing does not bring the dead back to life, or it may be based on the belief that, as Martin Luther King said, those who do not learn to live together as brothers [SIC] are all going to perish together as fools. An encouraging thought here is that, even in the midst of the most cruel conflicts, small islands of tolerance and civility always continue to exist - men and women who, through acts of extreme courage, save the lives of people "from the other side".

The move towards such coexistence requires first of all that victims and perpetrators be freed from the paralyzing isolation and all-consuming self-pity in which they often live. This involves the building or renewal of communication inside the communities of victims and offenders and between them. Political and community leaders, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and religious institutions have a serious responsibility here. They can initiate or sustain programmes for such liberating communication. Or, as symbolic representatives of victims and offenders, they can initiate dialogue if those directly involved are not yet ready to talk. (Chapter 6 concludes with a case study of a Northern Irish initiative for victim-to-victim and victim-to-offender dialogue.)

A second condition is a safe environment. Without a minimum of physical security there is no prospect of any progress along the path to reconciliation. Local and/or international political decision-makers have a crucial role to play at this point. Serious effort must be directed towards establishing the rule of law on equitable and accepted terms.

Conflicts do not disappear with this step in the reconciliation process. Individuals, groups and communities continue to be adversaries, but they agree to disagree and to use less violent means to accommodate old (and new) disputes. One possible way is to exchange private vengeance for retribution by an institution (e.g., a criminal court) which is bound by agreed rules (see chapter 7).

Stage 2. When Fear No Longer Rules: Building Confidence and Trust

Then, in due course, coexistence evolves towards a relation of trust. This second stage in the process requires that each party, both the victim and the offender, gains renewed confidence in himself or herself and in each other. It also entails believing that humanity is present in every man and woman: an acknowledgement of the humanity of others is the basis of mutual trust and opens the door for the gradual arrival of a sustainable culture of non-violence. In the context of Kosovo, Howard Clark writes: "One can counsel distinguishing between a person and his actions, hating the sin while trying not to hate the sinner; one can also attempt to understand the human weakness of those who were swept away by the tide. However, even when one cannot forgive, there are some minimum standards below which one should not sink: social reconstruction demands respecting the rights of those one detests. This respect is in itself an assertion of one's own humanity".

Another product of stage 2 is the victim's capacity to distinguish degrees of guilt among the perpetrators - to disaggregate individual and community. This is an important move in destroying atrocity myths, which keep alive the idea that all the members of a rival group are actual or potential perpetrators. Courts of law can make a difference here: their mission is precisely to individualize guilt. Traditional justice mechanisms often create similar opportunities. In October 2001 the population of Rwanda elected more than 200,000 lay judges who oversee some 10,000 gacaca tribunals, a society-rooted institution where individual guilt in the 1994 genocide will be publicly discussed (see the case

study at the end of chapter 7).

For trust and confidence to truly develop, a post-conflict society has to put in place a minimum of functioning institutions - a non-partisan judiciary, an effective civil service and an appropriate legislative structure. It is this condition that links a reconciliation policy to the many other tasks of a transition from violent conflict to durable peace.

Stage 3. Towards Empathy

Empathy comes with the victims' willingness to listen to the reasons for the hatred of those who caused their pain and with the offenders' understanding of the anger and bitterness of those who suffered.

One way to make this possible is the work of truth commissions, sifting fact from fiction, truth from myth. In addition such commissions may lead to an official acknowledgement of the injustice inflicted (see chapters 7 and 8). Truth-telling is also a precondition of reconciliation because it creates objective opportunities for people to see the past in terms of shared suffering and collective responsibility. More important still is the recognition that victims and offenders share a common identity, as survivors and as human beings, and simply have to get on with each other. In some cases the parties in the conflict will seek and discover meeting points where partnership appears more sensible than sustained conflict. Common interests may be found in roles and identities that cross former lines of division, such as religion, gender and generation - or region, as in the case of the Burundian province of Ngozi, where Hutu and Tutsi are collaborating closely in an attempt to improve the prospects of their region, thus transcending the divisions of the past. Economic concerns too may inspire such bridging activities, as they do in Kosovo, where Albanian trade unionists and a Serbian workers' movement have established post-war contacts.

Empathy does not necessarily lead to a fully harmonious society or to national unity. Conflicts and controversy are part and parcel of all human communities. Moreover, empathy does not exclude the continuation of feelings of anger. Nor does it require that the victim be ready to forgive and forget. Pardoning the offenders will, of course, broaden the basis for empathy, but for many victims it may be too distant, or too sudden, a goal, and to pursue it relentlessly may result in an abrupt and early end to the entire reconciliation process. At this stage it may be unjust to ask victims to forgive if perpetrators refrain from expressing regret and remorse, as has been the case in Argentina, Chile and Guatemala.

Accompanying the Three Stages: Introduction of the Codes of Democracy and a Just Socio-Economic Order

Peaceful coexistence, trust and empathy do not develop in a sustainable way if structural injustices in the political, legal and economic domains remain. A reconciliation process must therefore be supported by a gradual sharing of power, an honouring of each other's political commitments, the creation of a climate conducive to human rights and economic justice, and a willingness among the population at large to accept responsibility for the past and for the future - in other words, reconciliation must be backed by the recognition of the essential codes of democracy.

There are many examples of societies where reconciliation has remained hollow or unfinished precisely because one side of a previous divide refused, consciously or unintentionally, to acknowledge this need for democracy. Zimbabwe's recent history is a frightening demonstration of what happens when this is the case. Zimbabwe was for many years acclaimed as a model of reconciliation between blacks and whites after long-lasting colonial rule and a bloody military conflict. But thorough going

economic justice has not been achieved. It is widely believed that the end of the policy of reconciliation is partly based on and backed by a general disappointment among large sections of the black population who see that the economic disparities between Africans and white settlers have not disappeared. The experience of Zimbabwe is examined in the case study at the end of this chapter.

2.1.3 What Reconciliation Is Not

The use of the term “reconciliation” in dealing with past human injustice is not without its dangers. The interpretation of the concept is contested, and there are many erroneous notions of what reconciliation is. (See section 1.2 for clarification of the definitions of reconciliation.)

In a political context, those who want nothing done may cynically plan reconciliation merely as a smokescreen. Victims, on the other hand, may perceive and condemn it as a code word for simply forgetting. For those who have to live with their own pain and trauma, the term is indeed extremely sensitive. As a victim of apartheid told the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), “Reconciliation is only in the vocabulary of those who can afford it. It is non-existent to a person whose self-respect has been stripped away and poverty is a festering wound that consumes his soul”. A general feeling among black and coloured South Africans is that the discourse on reconciliation has pressured them towards a premature closure with the past.

Reconciliation must be seen as a long-term process that may take decades or generations.

A second source of misunderstandings is that the people of a post-conflict society are sometimes forced to be impatient, as if coexistence, trust and empathy can come swiftly. Such timing, expecting too much too soon - especially if it is proclaimed as official policy - is doomed to fail. Reconciliation must be seen as a long-term process that may take decades or generations. Reconciliation based on ambiguity will not last. The notion and its interpretation must be publicly discussed. Here lies a task for the authorities, the media, schools and civil society in its broadest shape - NGOs, advocacy groups, religious institutions and so on. The need for peaceful coexistence, trust and empathy must be internalized before any effective policy can be set in motion. Such society-wide debate will have to take into account that genuine reconciliation is much more than rebuilding relationships between former enemies, or between victims and perpetrators.

2.2 Reconciliation: Who is Involved?

Coexistence, trust and empathy develop between individuals who are connected as victims, beneficiaries and perpetrators. This is reconciliation at the interpersonal level. That is, for example, what happens when the victim is willing to shake hands with the torturer who inflicted their pain. Many initiatives in the area of healing (for example, counselling victims and offenders together) and restorative justice (for example, mediation) take this route towards reconciliation. However, all the steps in the process also entail the reconciling of groups and communities as a whole. Each perspective, the interpersonal and the collective, has its own chemistry but they are equally important in the process.

All the steps in the process entail the reconciling of not only individuals, but also groups and communities as a whole.

Individual victims and perpetrators are at the heart of all reconciliation activities. However, both categories embrace many more persons and groups than those who are directly involved in acts of political, ethnic or religious violence. The definition of victimhood, as it is used in chapter 4, includes family members, neighbours and even friends of direct victims, all of whom may have been traumatized by what they

have experienced or witnessed. Accountability must be understood in similarly broad terms. For example, beneficiaries of the South African apartheid system are guilty in a moral sense. Indifference, incompetence or neglect may be at the origin of the complicity of the international community (see chapter 5). Special attention should be given to the victims and offenders who fled their country and are living as refugees in neighbouring countries or as asylum seekers around the world. The tendency to forget these people is often the source of persistent problems in the search for reconciliation. The question is particularly delicate in cases where refugees return to areas and communities that remain unhealed and are consequently unprepared to receive men and women who are either victims or perpetrators. As a former head of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) wrote, “Returnees can indeed be an obstacle to coexistence and reconciliation. Their return inevitably raises issues of property, compensation, unpunished crimes”.

There are various types of collective victims and offenders (see chapters 4 and 5). Religious institutions may be both victims (for example, in East Timor) and co-responsible for grave violations of human rights (as was the case in apartheid South Africa). Churches can act as facilitators - in Northern Ireland members of the Protestant clergy held meetings with Catholic paramilitary and political leaders - organize victim support, provide safe places for victim/offender dialogue and deliver a spiritual contribution to healing programmes. Hate media, like Radio Milles Collines in Rwanda, which helped incite the genocide, may be extremely culpable, but the media can be an invaluable tool in disseminating information to increase trust and empathy.

Lasting reconciliation must be home-grown.

The role of the international community is important, too, but it must take a cautious and restrained approach. Respect for the specific historical and cultural context of a conflict and of a domestic reconciliation process is essential. Lasting reconciliation must be home-grown because in the end it is the survivors who assign meaning to the term and the process. The credibility of official institutions like the UN and of NGOs is often damaged because of an explicit disregard for this central rule that a post-conflict society must “own” its reconciliation process. However, even within such a context of caution and restraint, the international community can be very useful in supporting and monitoring local reconciliation programmes, giving advice and training, and providing material resources. For example, the UN has constructively sponsored truth-telling in El Salvador and Guatemala.

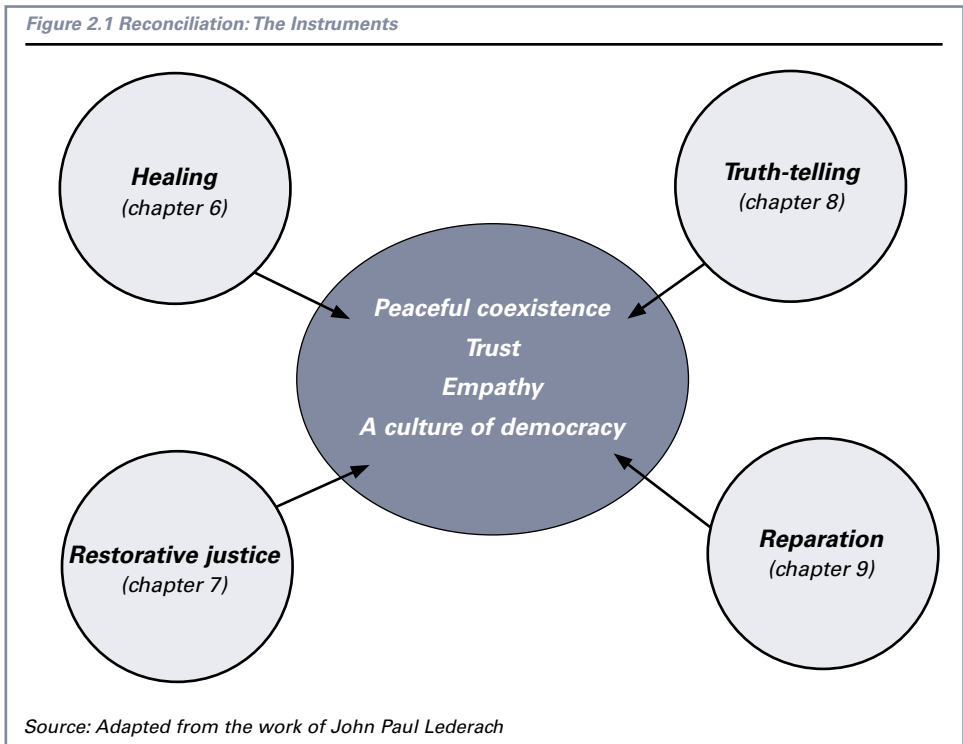
2.3 Reconciliation: How?

Burying the past in a reconciliatory way requires the mobilization of a variety of techniques (see figure 2.1). Most of them have to be activated in the short run:

- healing the wounds of the survivors;
- some form of retributive or restorative justice;
- historical accounting via truth-telling; and
- reparation of the material and psychological damage inflicted on the victims.

There are close links between these four mechanisms. Without reparation there can be no healing. Restorative justice, if adequately organized, can heal the wounds of both victim and perpetrator. Telling his or her story also can have a healing effect on the victim and the offender (“revealing is healing” was the slogan of the South African TRC). In addition, the acknowledgement of what happened is a way of breaking the vicious circle of impunity: silence and amnesia are the enemies of justice.

Much has been written about the influence of these four instruments in the reconciliation process. Some believe that truth-telling, for example, leads directly to trust, empathy and even forgiveness. This conviction is clearly present in the label “truth and reconciliation commission”. It is an accurate name insofar as seeking for accuracy about the past is a vital step in the reconciliation process, according to our wide definition. But “truth” in itself will not bring reconciliation. Truth-seeking is a key ingredient, but only one ingredient, in reconciliation. In the same way, justice is a vital requirement for healing wounds, making offenders accountable, and re-establishing a relationship of equity and respect. But justice alone does not produce full reconciliation. Truth and justice are not separate from reconciliation: they are key parts of it.



Healing, truth-seeking, justice and reparation lay the foundations for the gradual creation of the various outcomes of the reconciliation process. They create favourable conditions and generate opportunities. But other, often long-term, investments are also needed, such as educational programmes and human rights awareness activities.

Decisions to be Taken, Choices to be Made

Political and civil society leaders are faced with a variety of strategic and structural choices. The identification of critical factors and potential solutions is crucial. Many of these choices are dealt with in other chapters, but the following is a brief presentation of some of the more general problems.

The Question of Whether to Address Reconciliation

It seems self-evident to see reconciliation as a vital requirement in societies that are emerging from a terrifying past, but there are post-conflict countries where the notion of reconciliation is simply

rejected in public discourse. A UNHCR memorandum notes: “In Rwanda, for example, the attitude of the government in the years that followed the genocide was to insist on the need for justice. The word ‘reconciliation’ was taboo for those who had survived genocide, and was never publicly used.... In Kosovo, the very word ‘reconciliation’ is so charged for the Albanian community, that it is simply not used”.

The place reconciliation receives on the agenda of a transitional society depends on the particular conjunction of political, cultural and historical forces. Demands for a reconciliation policy tend to be widespread following a negotiated shift from the old to the new order, for example, but largely non-existent in the wake of a military victory. Where religion is a predominant feature of the culture, as in South Africa, calls for reconciliation programmes can be numerous and explicit. History, too, may have an effect, depending on previous experience with reconciliation initiatives. In post-World War II Belgium, the idea of eventual reconciliation with those who had collaborated with the Nazis was greatly affected by memories of what had happened in the aftermath of World War I: many of the Belgians who had collaborated with the German occupiers in World War I and were granted amnesty afterwards simply repeated the offence in 1940. Their opponents felt that the repetition was encouraged by this leniency, and they consequently rejected as unthinkable calls for speedy reconciliation after World War II.

Any reconciliation policy, as we have seen, is a very delicate operation, and failures do happen. This may encourage post-conflict societies to choose a minimalist approach or to avoid the venture altogether. But all one can say is that not to address the question of reconciliation is by far the worst response.

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No “One-Size-Fits-All” Policy

This Handbook presents a conceptual framework, but it is up to the local decision-makers to translate the concepts into concrete, systematic programmes. This “reality check” is one of the most difficult challenges in putting together a reconciliation policy, above all because the particular requirements of each post-conflict context require politically and culturally rooted responses.

Moreover, one tool alone will not achieve reconciliation against a background of accumulated feelings of hostility. A combination of measures and instruments is called for. Such a mixture will have to be innovative, again because of the uniqueness of each society that emerges from a violent conflict.

Who “Owns” the Process?

The role of the public authorities in planning and setting up reconciliation programmes is crucial, but opinions differ as to the direction such official policies should take.

The bottom-up approach is one that sees improved interpersonal relations among community members as the primary area for reconciliation work. Local, home-grown reconciliation and grass-roots initiatives are viewed as the key to success. “In contrast”, writes Hugo van der Merwe, a South African scholar, “the top-down approach is characterized by a perception that ... for local dynamics to change, national intervention must first take place. This will then filter down, or create the conditions (and incentives) within which local actors can pursue reconciliation processes”.

The South African TRC took the top-down approach. Many observers have commented that this strategy led to some of its neglect of the perceptions of reconciliation in local communities and insufficient mobilization of NGOs. As a result many opportunities have not been taken - the educational

potential of the NGOs in informing the population at large on the TRC, the databases they built up over the course of time, and the networks through which evidence could be collected.

It is also an illusion to believe that reconciliation imposed from the top will automatically engender individual steps towards reconciliation. The authorities cannot impose trust and empathy by decree. Nor can they forgive in the name of the victims. (Former President Nelson Mandela's rhetoric about forgiveness is still a source of considerable frustration in parts of South Africa's black community.) The history of amnesty legislation delivers the same lesson. Shortly after World War II, France and the Netherlands issued amnesty laws for those who had collaborated with the Germans in a move to bury the past and speed up reconciliation and national unity, but this proved to be little more than a "legal forgetting". It did not touch the hearts and the souls of many citizens. The amnesty policies of

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several Latin American countries in the 1980s were even less successful. They did not, for example, discourage the families of the disappeared from demanding, again and again, justice and retribution.

Nevertheless, what occurs at the official level is not entirely without effect on individual attitudes and behaviour. The authorities can create a climate that encourages private steps

towards reconciliation. A public apology by a president, the establishment of a memorial day or the construction of a museum can have a considerable impact on individual victims and perpetrators.

One conclusion might be that, in the words of van der Merwe: "Top-down and bottom-up processes are both essential for a more sustainable long-term reconciliation process. They should, however, be pursued in a complementary fashion rather than at the expense of one another".

Balancing Reconciliation and Retributive Justice

Restoring the moral order that has broken down requires that "justice be done". A successor government owes it, above all, as a moral obligation to the victims of the repressive system. Post-conflict justice serves to heal the wounds and to repair the private and public damage done by the antecedent regime. As a sort of ritual cleansing process, it also paves the way for a moral and political renaissance. On the other hand, judicial operations may thwart and stifle efforts for the lasting reconciliation on which the new regime depends in order to function.

The need to "close the history books" is one of the main arguments of advocates of amnesty laws: they claim that reconciliation can only be produced if the successor elites refrain from prosecuting the officials of the previous regime. Such was Uruguayan President Sanguinetti's justification of an amnesty law pardoning abuses of a previous military regime: "The Uruguayan government has decided to take measures of magnanimity or clemency using a mechanism provided for in the Constitution of the Republic. The 12 years of dictatorship have left scars that will need a long time to heal and it is good to begin to do so. The country needs reconciliation to face a difficult but promising future". The same argument has been used by Nelson Mandela in defence of the amnesty clauses in the South African provisional constitution and in the mandate of the TRC. Others argue that the absence of judicial actions precludes reconciliation.

Tina Rosenberg, a journalist who has written extensively on this topic, says: "If the victims in a society do not feel that their suffering has been acknowledged, then they . . . are not ready to put the past behind them. If they know that the horrible crimes carried out in secret will always remain buried . . . then they are not ready for reconciliation". She adds: "The kind of reconciliation that lets bygones be bygones is not true reconciliation. It is reconciliation at gunpoint and should not

be confused with the real thing”. To strike a balance between the demands of repressive justice and of reconciliation is no easy enterprise. It entails a difficult and, on occasion, tortuous cost–benefit analysis. All costs and gains must be balanced against each other. (See chapter 7 for a more detailed discussion.)

2.4 Reconciliation: When, in What Order and How Fast?

Given the volatility of an immediate post-conflict context, time management in processing reconciliation is an extremely important but difficult dimension in the search for a shared future. Policies must not come too soon or too late. Questions and challenges abound.

- When to develop reconciliation activities?
- What is the proper sequencing?
- What is the appropriate pace?

2.4.1 Time

The end of a violent conflict creates a complex agenda - rebuilding the political machinery and the civil service, holding free elections, drafting a national constitution, guaranteeing a minimum of physical security, establishing a non-partisan judiciary, prosecuting human rights abusers, stabilizing the currency, rebuilding the economic infrastructure, and so on. More often than not it will be impossible to tackle all tasks simultaneously. As reconciliation is only one of the many challenges, short-term political or economic interests may lead to reconciliation measures being postponed. Or a post-conflict society may be forced to direct its efforts in several directions at once, ultimately allocating insufficient attention to the building of coexistence, trust and empathy.

The decision as to when to develop reconciliation processes will inevitably impact seriously on the final outcome. Difficult decisions have to be taken. To get the time as right as possible, policy makers must:

- “Understand the times”, that is, make an adequate reading of the forces that exert an influence on the transition agenda.
- Be conscious of the importance of measures for the long term.
- Be aware that the mere passage of time will not ultimately generate reconciliation.

Understanding the Times

Some of the factors affecting a society’s dealings with a violent past, such as the nature of the peace settlement, also shape the ranking of problems that appear on the transition agenda. Past experience shows that this has often led to politics and economics being put first, at the expense of reconciliation programmes. International financial institutions (particularly the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund) tend to encourage that approach. If political and economic reforms receive priority then, since improvement in socio-economic conditions for victims is a key step to reconciliation, care must be taken not to damage the prospects of long-term reconciliation by establishing inappropriate political and economic structures. (See chapter 3 for further discussion of factors affecting a society’s dealing with a violent past.)

However, reconciliation efforts cannot be put off indefinitely. Experience with past truth commissions suggests that the quality of witness statements diminishes quite fast. Healing also has to start soon, as with time victims become further trapped in their pain and isolation. If the context prevents an early start, at least interim measures should be taken. Recent developments can help facilitate an early start of reconciliation-oriented activities:

- Reconciliation is now clearly seen as a crucial dimension of conflict prevention - hence the more prominent place given to it in the policies of post-conflict states, of the UN and of many donor countries.
- In some post-conflict countries mobilization and empowerment of victims have reached a point where demands for progress in the area of healing and truth-seeking can no longer be denied.
- The amount of information available on healing, truth-telling, justice and reparation programmes has grown considerably. The experience of the South African and Guatemalan truth commissions has

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led to the dissemination of quasi-models. Information networks now exist - for example, the New York-based International Center for Transitional Justice, and the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation in Cape Town - which offer professional expertise in the domain of reconciliation. Several international

NGOs support local activities. Avocats sans Frontières, for example, has produced the manual that is being used in Rwanda to train the gacaca judges.

The Importance of Long-Term Measures

Healing, truth-telling and reparation will deliver important short-term benefits but generally they will not eliminate altogether the underlying causes of the past violence. They serve as an invaluable starting point and lay the foundations for more durable reconciliation processes, but long-term tools are also required. Three such tools are education, memory and retrospective apologies.

Education for reconciliation *

Education - described in the Oxford English Dictionary as “systematic training and instruction designed to impart knowledge and develop skill” - has too often been manipulated in the pursuit of domination and oppression. Denial of access to basic education has been used to maintain political, economic and social imbalances and injustice, to separate and subjugate, to engender prejudice and to fuel the animosity and antagonism upon which violent conflict is based.

Education systems segregated along ethnic or religious lines - such as those in Northern Ireland, Israel and Palestine and the former Yugoslavia - help to perpetuate dramatically divergent views of both history and current events. A segregated education system can hinder the development of meaningful relations across ethnic or religious divides. When the knowledge imparted and the skills developed are those that separate us, or further separate us, should we not ask more of our education systems? If we consider that one of the basic tenets of reconciliation is the building - or rebuilding - of relationships after conflict, then what would education for reconciliation entail?

A 1996 report from the UNESCO Commission on Education puts great emphasis on a type of education called “Learning to Live Together”. The report demonstrates the contribution this approach can make to a more peaceful world “by developing an understanding of others and their history, traditions and spiritual values and, on this basis, creating a new spirit which, guided by recognition of our growing interdependence and a common analysis of the risks and challenges of the future, would induce people to implement common projects or to manage the inevitable conflict in an intelligent and peaceful way”.

Programmes designed to educate in “an intelligent and peaceful way” have been developed globally and are encompassed in a number of different educational models. One of them is “Education for

* This sub-section was contributed by Noreen Callaghan.

Reconciliation”, in Ireland. Basically it is an educational framework designed to assist the recovery of post-conflict societies. Inasmuch as every conflict arises in a unique context, programmes need to be devised - or adapted - to meet the specific psychological, political, social and cultural circumstances in which the conflict, and therefore the recovery process, occurs.

However it is structured, there are a number of basic elements fundamental to an education for reconciliation programme. The themes of justice, tolerance and peace need to be woven into the education system. Education for reconciliation should therefore:

- Promote an understanding of the causes, consequences and possible resolutions of conflict and estrangement on the personal, social, institutional and global levels.
- Introduce and develop the skills necessary to rebuild relationships torn apart by violent conflict.
- Develop an understanding and accommodation for the differences that may exist in experience, ethnicity, religion, political beliefs and so on. It must be rooted in fundamental values such as respect, dignity and equality, be concerned with issues of pluralism in general, and address specific issues of culture, identity, class and gender.

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We must ensure that education for reconciliation is not only a utopian idea but also a realistic and responsible praxis. In Ireland, for example, consideration is being given to the development of reconciliation-oriented curricula, textbooks and other educational materials across a broad range of subjects within the formal education system. The potential of education for reconciliation is being explored in history, geography and science, in the Irish and English languages, in religious education and in civic, social and political education courses.

Education for reconciliation needs also to be a fundamental part of non-formal education systems, particularly in situations where the education system is still strongly divided along ethnic and political lines. For example, education for reconciliation in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina takes place not within the school system but within the NGO and youth sectors. Projects are practical and creative, and often need to be quite simple in the face of complex, devastating conflict. They offer an opportunity for people who have been divided by violent conflict to come together and discover their common humanity, to help rebuild their own lives and the fabric of society, and to find ways to ensure that the cycle of violence ends.

Development assistance agencies can encourage and support such efforts by:

- Providing funding for conflict transformation, peace and reconciliation-related education and training projects.
- Facilitating opportunities by which communities emerging from conflict can share their experience and learn from others who have tackled similar issues.
- Encouraging and supporting education ministries to analyse and examine how education systems need to change and expand in order to promote sustainable peace.

The Role of Memory

Post-conflict countries sometimes choose to ignore the past completely. This may arise from a desire not to reopen wounds for fear of endangering a fragile peace: Cambodia is often cited as a case in point (see the case study at the end of this chapter). In other societies, forced amnesia is part of a conscious strategy on the part of those who committed violence, as happened in the 1980s in some Latin American countries.

History teaches that, in the long run, such a policy is a serious obstacle on the road from a divided past to a shared future. Amnesia is the enemy of reconciliation because:

- It refuses victims the public acknowledgement of their pain.
- It invites offenders to take the path of denial.
- It deprives future generations of the opportunity to understand and learn from the past and to participate in the building of a lasting reconciliation.

However, memory is a two-edged sword. It can play a crucial role in making reconciliation sustainable. But it also has the capacity to hinder reconciliation processes.

There is the danger of too much memory. As Andrew Rigby writes: “Too great a concern with remembering the past can mean that the divisions and conflicts of old never die, the wounds are never healed. In such circumstances the past continues to dominate the present, and hence to some degree determines the future”. Memory is often selective and, worse, it can be manipulated and abused.

Memory naturally tends to be selective. This is the case in everyday life, even in situations that are not haunted by conflict. Selectivity produces real risks in the context of prolonged violence. Most Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo, or Muslims and Serbs in Bosnia, for example, have developed completely different recollections of their common past. If they are not corrected through mechanisms such as an independent truth commission, then selective memories are handed down from generation to generation.

Memory can be manipulated. Policy makers in post-conflict societies often tend to impose a version of the past that increases the chances of much-needed unity being achieved. This happened in post-World War II France, where the German occupation had deeply divided the population into resisters and collaborators. After the war a well-planned operation of public discourse and academic research minimized the importance of collaboration and maximized the role of the Resistance. A glorious past was invented. Only in the 1960s did cracks begin to appear in this official self-image, and the old divisions rose again to challenge it.

Wholesale abuse of memory is not uncommon. Some leaders of parties in a brutal conflict may deliberately keep alive a memory that fuels the fires of hatred - Northern Ireland over many years is just one example.

Yet memory can also be a powerful instrument for achieving reconciliation.

It may provide early warning signals, teaching future generations how to identify the first signs of renewed and potentially dangerous distrust. In the context of this argument the words of philosopher George Santayana carry their full weight: “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it”.

It can be cast in forms that are conducive to reconciliation - permanent monuments to commemorate the fate of victims, places of remembrance (for instance, Robben Island in South Africa), memorial days or plays and poems. These give a collective dimension to private pain, creating a long-lasting healing mechanism. An appropriate use of memory is considerably facilitated if a truth-seeking institution - independent, official or civil society-based - has prepared the ground. A publicly acknowledged reconstruction of the past might even allow for competing memories

to coexist. Given the dangers of too much memory, a society must try to attain the right delicate mixture of remembering and forgetting.

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The Relevance of Delayed Apologies

Recent times have been characterized by a wave of apologies for injustices that happened in the distant past. Slavery, the atrocities committed in the context of colonialism, the Holocaust, the inhuman internment of American-Japanese during World War II, stealing aboriginal children in Australia, apartheid, the Rwandan genocide - all have recently been the subject of apologies by the political heirs of these acts. In some cases official expressions of regret and admissions of accountability have been accompanied by the full or partial payment of an old and still unpaid debt.

Are such apologies part of a final reconciliation-oriented gesture? Do they really contribute to reconciliation? Who is entitled to offer, and who to accept, apologies? Opinions differ. Some say that the politics of apologizing is a cheap and easy way of getting rid of a bad conscience, or that it is completely meaningless because it is rarely followed by compensatory measures. Others argue that such acts can have an important effect - if certain conditions are met:

- The sincerity of the gesture must be clearly demonstrated.
- There must be full and unqualified acceptance of responsibility.
- Any justification of the original action (or inaction in the case of bystanders) must be avoided.
- If the events of the past still produce grief or inequalities, those who apologize in the name of their ancestors must express a clear commitment to change.

Time Does Not Heal All Wounds

It is unwise to believe that the mere passage of time will ultimately produce reconciliation. All the evidence today shows that the quest for truth, justice and reparation - essential stages on the way to reconciliation - does not simply disappear with time.

In the case of Cambodia, a more pronounced search for justice and truth has only recently become a realistic possibility, many years after the end of the violence. In Latin America, the political and cultural imposition of “forgiving and forgetting” failed completely to stifle demands for the prosecution of the Pinochets of the continent. South African members of the TRC have been asked by Native Americans to help them set up a commission to examine the treatment of their ancestors in the 1800s and early 1900s. And the 2001 UN Conference on Racism raised the question of reparation and compensation for the pain and damage inflicted during the times of slavery and colonialism. A violent past, particularly if not dealt with in an adequate manner, is like a fire that intermittently flares up. Years of silence alternate with periods of unrest and deep emotion.

2.4.2 Timing

Any reconciliation policy needs a “flight plan” to control the proper sequencing of the steps and dimensions of the process. What should come first - healing initiatives, positive discrimination in favour of the victims in housing and education, locking up leading offenders, or saving vital documents for the future search for truth? Improper sequencing may have undesirable effects. The threat of trials may incite suspects to destroy evidence. Giving priority to truth-telling may frustrate victims who are in urgent need of housing or medical care.

The problem is that historical analogies from which firm, unequivocal lessons can be drawn are scarce. It is well known that certain measures are more urgent than others, for instance, facilitating communication between the former warring parties, taking provisional disciplinary action against the primary offenders, and repairing the most grave physical and material damage inflicted on the victims. Flexibility is the watchword that should guide policy makers and civil society leaders. They also must be aware of the fact that authorities and victims have different timescales, and that com-

munity and individual needs tend to change fast in the immediate post-conflict period.

2.4.3 Tempo

What is the appropriate cadence of reconciliation activities? Again, there is no standard approach. The appropriate time frame of the various stages in the process (achieving peaceful coexistence, trust and empathy) depends on each context. So does the amount of time needed to implement the four pillars of reconciliation policy (healing, justice, truth-telling and reparation).

A rushed approach to reconciliation will almost certainly be counterproductive.

Experience suggests that a rushed approach, as regularly advocated by national and international peacemakers and facilitators, will almost certainly be counterproductive. In the immediate aftermath of a civil war or of an inhuman regime, victims are too preoccupied with their own distress to develop trust and empathy in a hurry. In addition, coming to terms with human injustice is a deeply personal process. It touches the cognitive and the emotional, the rational and the non-rational in human beings. It is culturally determined and gender-based. How people view the tempo of a reconciliation process is also intimately linked with their position and experiences during the conflict. All this results in individuals and groups finding themselves at different levels and stages on the continuum that leads from open hostility to trustful relations.

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