

CHAPTER 4

Strengthening the Structures set up under the National Peace Accord

For one day in 1993, peace reigned across South Africa. At the close of the day on 2 September, the beginning of a month-long peace campaign, police reported that for once, there had been no politically motivated deaths nationwide that day.

The day captured the imagination of all South Africans: black and white, rich and poor, young and old. In the townships, children scrambled up military vehicles waving flags depicting doves and chanting 'we want peace'. At noon, thousands poured out into the streets to form human chains and observe a minute of silence as a pledge of their support for peace.

In the East Rand, township residents, local and international monitors marched through some of the most troubled areas – on any other day 'no-go zones' – to send off six local peace monitors on a 'walk for peace' from Johannesburg to Durban.

As we note in Chapter 3, the peace that broke out across South Africa on this day was short lived. But the message that still resounds from this emotional occasion is that most ordinary South Africans yearn for peace.

Despite the violence that engulfs the country, striving to resolve problems peacefully remains a feature of South Africa. In 1993, for the third time in recent years, South Africa received recognition for this fact with the joint award of the Nobel Peace Prize to President de Klerk and Mr Mandela. The other South Africans who have received this award have been Chief Albert Luthuli and Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

On a day to day basis, efforts to achieve peace rest largely in the hands of the structures set up under the National Peace Accord signed by a broad cross-section of parties and interest groups on 14 September 1991. In accordance with our mandate, much of COMSA's effort during this phase has continued to be directed at assisting these structures, in close co-operation with the other international observer groups.

NATIONAL STRUCTURES

The National Peace Committee and National Peace Secretariat

At the apex of the National Peace Accord is the National Peace Committee (NPC), chaired by John Hall, and in which all signatories are represented at a senior level. The decisions of this committee, and the day to day co-ordination of peace efforts, are carried out by the National Peace Secretariat (NPS), the statutory body chaired by Dr Gildenhuys.

During the period under review, COMSA attended policy-meetings of the NPC and an internal review of its activities on 14 September 1993, the second anniversary of the signing of the National Peace Accord.

Co-ordination meetings with the NPS, and the other three international observer missions in South Africa (the United Nations, Organisation of African Unity and European Community), took place on a regular basis – usually once a week. At these meetings, we collectively drew to the attention of the NPS matters of concern to the international observer missions.

These frequently arose out of observations made at the local level (for example, the non-participation by a particular party in a Local Peace Committee, which was hampering the functioning of that structure). We also used these occasions to raise broader policy issues, such as the carrying and misuse of weapons in public places, cited in Chapter 5.

Initiatives taken by the international observer missions, such as the request to monitor the investigations into the Mamelodi killings mentioned in Chapter 3, were channelled through the NPS. The Commonwealth's bilateral technical assistance projects, described in this chapter and in Chapter 5, have been carried out through the NPS.

COMSA, along with the other international observer missions, has continued to attend the quarterly meetings of representatives of the NPC, NPS and chairpersons of the Regional Peace Committees, at which decisions affecting all these structures are taken.

From these contacts, we have formed the following observations:

- Administratively, financially and organisationally, the Peace Accord structures are on a considerably better footing than when we released our last report in May.

After considerable pressure, the NPS now has a degree of autonomy over its finances. In the past, direct Government financing of the NPS had tended to lessen its credibility. This is therefore a welcome development. We hope that, especially as South Africa enters the transitional period, it may be possible to include in the NPS staff persons drawn from outside the existing bureaucracy. The staff already working for the NPS are stretched and would be assisted, in our view, by additional staff, drawn from a broader spectrum.

In mid-1993, as one of the measures announced to help reduce violence, the Government pledged to increase financial support for the NPS. On the ground, there is evidence of infrastructural improvements. Several Regional and Local Peace Committees now have offices and equipment not in evidence before. We urge that, especially in the forthcoming months, when the Peace Accord structures are likely to face considerable demands in the run-up to elections, the necessary resources be made available.

Considerable efforts have been made to fill permanent staff positions in the regional and local offices. Because of the need to find persons for these posts who are neutral and acceptable to all members of these committees, this is not an easy task. In some areas finding suitable persons for these posts still poses problems (see section below on Local and Regional Peace Committees). However, we commend the efforts that have been made, and are especially pleased to note that attention is being paid to achieving racial and gender balance in these appointments, although this will continue to be a challenge.

- The extent to which the Peace Accord structures are known has improved substantially since we released our last report. Efforts like the peace campaign launched in September – with its flags, peace buttons, T-shirts, a peace song, and continuing advertisements in the media – have made an important contribution towards achieving this objective. However, as we note in the discussion on the East Rand below, the marketing campaign needs to extend beyond advertising, and include community meetings and interaction.
- As we have often commented in the past, and as the peace structures themselves are well aware, there is considerable scope for increasing the extent of participation. Many parties and entities are still not signatories – such as the PAC, Bophuthatswana and the AWB (see Chapter 2). We have been encouraged by indications from some of these groups that they are considering signing the Accord. We urge these groups to take this initiative, especially in the forthcoming months, when political tensions are likely to run high. Provision, and direct overtures, could also be made to interest groups not currently catered for in the Peace Accord structures, such as refugees and squatters, who are assumed to belong to one or other political party, but whom in reality may belong to none. We expand on this point in our discussion of the situation in the East Rand.
- The level of support for the peace structures at the highest political levels remains disappointing. For over a year, the NPC has been trying without success to assemble leaders of the signatories to the Accord for a meeting. Even an effort to get these leaders together for a short ceremony to receive public signatures supporting peace gathered during peace month has proved unsuccessful. While we appreciate that most leaders have been preoccupied with political negotiations in the last few months, we urge that they find time to publicly reaffirm their support for the Peace Accord.

- Inflammatory language, the training of private armies and the carrying of dangerous weapons – discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3 – all point to the continued breaches of the Accord: so numerous that many now go unrecorded. In our last report, we stressed that we did not think that this was a problem that could be solved through legislation. We recommended, and reiterate, the need for a concerted campaign to publicise such breaches whenever they occur, in an effort to get parties to apologise and make amends in response to public pressure. So far, the NPS' campaign has focused on publicising peace. There is perhaps a good case, especially in the forthcoming months, for publicising the misdeeds of those who continue to foment violence.
- Like most organisations in South Africa, the NPS has been considering what role it might most usefully play in the lead-up to and during the elections. The preliminary thinking is that the NPS and its related structures should intensify their current efforts to reduce violence, rather than replicate the work of the local and international groups expected to observe the elections. A paper on this issue by the NPS points out that the most serious problems during the elections are likely to be: the holding of public meetings in what is traditionally regarded as another party/organisation's territory, and the intimidation of campaign workers and members of the various parties.

We endorse the NPS view that these sorts of problems call for monitoring and mediation skills of the sort that the peace structures have been developing, and that the most useful contribution the peace structures can make to the successful holding of an election is to enhance these skills now through training.

The Seconding of a Commonwealth Facilitator/Trainer to the NPS

At the heart of the work of the NPS and the local peace committees is the dedicated effort of facilitators who strive to bring warring factions into dialogue, and search for creative solutions to the myriad of problems – economic, political and social – which beset communities in South Africa. The country, through the work of the NPS, specialised mediation services and independent bodies such as the churches, has developed an impressive indigenous capacity in mediation, but there is still a scarcity of these skills.

Arising from the contacts between COMSA and the NPS, in June 1993 the Chairman of the NPS requested the Commonwealth to assist in the development and training of facilitators working with local and regional peace committees.

Based on this request, the Commonwealth seconded to the NPS, utilising the resources of the CFTC, a Zambian diplomat with experience in conflict resolution at both international and local level. His duties include the provision of support and on-the-job training to facilitators working at the grassroots level, and contributing to the NPS' efforts to strengthen its overall capacities in this area, which falls under the NPS Training Subcommittee.

Socio-Economic Reconstruction and Development

In the second COMSA Report, we cited an example of successful reconstruction by peace structures in the Ensimbini Valley to rebuild houses destroyed in the violence as part of the peace agreement. At the same time, the Report noted that there were serious administrative and political problems within the Socio-Economic Reconstruction and Development Subcommittee (SERD) of the NPC hampering the effectiveness of this aspect of the Peace Accord's work. These weaknesses have persisted.

In October, SERD conducted a major review of its mandate and modus operandi to address some of these problems. In these discussions, it became evident that the development environment in which SERD operates has changed significantly since the signing of the Peace Accord in September 1991.

The most important change has been the mushrooming of NGOs and community organisations, and the creation of forums in virtually every sector – health, education, housing, and electricity to give some examples – and at a regional level in the Western Cape, Orange Free State, Eastern Cape, Border Kei, Natal/KwaZulu, Eastern Transvaal, Northern Transvaal, and the PWV area.

These forums were established to address development problems and to constrain 'unilateral' planning by Government agencies. Some of the forums, such as the National Hostels Co-ordinating Committee, have responsibilities which overlap with concerns of the peace structures.

The challenge for the NPC is to maintain its focus on dispute resolution and avoid duplicating the work of these specialised bodies. To effect this, it has now been decided that SERD committees should operate directly under Regional Peace Committees, with the NPS providing an information/co-ordination function.

It is hoped that this structure will make SERD more responsive to the needs at a local level, where its primary function will be to galvanise resources in support of peace initiatives.

To succeed, SERD will need to develop at the regional level a knowledge of available resources, and the skills to involve a wide range of economic actors – from local government, to parastatals, forums and the development community. COMSA will provide whatever assistance it can to achieve this objective.

REGIONAL AND LOCAL PEACE COMMITTEES

By far the greatest proportion of COMSA's time has been spent interacting with the regional and local structures of the National Peace Accord.

At present, there are 11 Regional and 85 Local Peace Committees across the country. Because of our limited numbers, we concentrated on just two regions, Natal and the PWV region which, as described in Chapter 3, are the worst affected by violence.

Natal/KwaZulu

At the end of the period under review, 15 out of a planned 26 Local Peace Committees (LPCs) had been established in Natal and the self-governing 'homeland' of KwaZulu.

COMSA focused its attention on helping to strengthen the existing LPCs, and trying to set up liaison committees or actual LPCs in areas where these do not yet exist. COMSA, along with other international observer missions, also continued to monitor major public gatherings in various parts of Natal/KwaZulu.

Umlazi

The Umlazi LPC was one of the first to be established in Natal. It meets regularly and is quite active. However, violent incidents continue to occur in the area. A high proportion of this violence arises from rivalry between hostel dwellers and others, including squatters, perceived to be on opposite sides of the political divide. In addition, the IFP charges that the Internal Stability Unit (ISU) deliberately targets members of the party.

The area known as Unit 17 in Umlazi consists mainly of hostel dwellers. Although IFP leaders have been taking part in the work of the Umlazi LPC, the local IFP leaders from Unit 17 declined to co-operate with, or be represented in, the LPC. This naturally weakened the LPC.

At the request of the LPC Chairman, COMSA explored the possibility of bringing the IFP leadership of Unit 17 into the LPC. The local IFP leaders initially agreed to meet only COMSA at a venue outside Umlazi. At this meeting with COMSA held in Durban on 14 October 1993, they expressed their distrust of the LPC and of the police, especially the ISU. COMSA was able to persuade them to meet with the Chairman of the LPC and later with representatives of the police. Further meetings between all parties concerned took place in October and November.

It is hoped that the dialogue which has now commenced between the local leadership of the IFP and the LPC will lead to local IFP representatives joining the Committee.

Umbumbulu

COMSA played an active role in facilitating the launch of the Umbumbulu LPC on 4 December 1992. A number of violent incidents, involving the IFP and ANC, recurred in August and September 1993, causing tension in the LPC. COMSA actively participated in meetings aimed at strengthening and revitalising the LPC, which continues to meet regularly and is an important stabilising factor in the area.

Kwa-Makhutha

Initially, the Kwa-Makhutha area fell under the Umbumbulu LPC. In view of

its size and the need for closer attention to the problems of violence in the area, it was felt that a separate LPC would be desirable. COMSA encouraged the launching of a Kwa-Makhutha LPC and helped to organise a historic joint rally of the IFP and ANC at the Kwa-Makhutha Football Stadium on 22 August 1993. Such developments have helped to reduce tension in the area. COMSA's thrust now is to help consolidate these gains.

South Durban (Lamontville)

The South Durban LPC experienced tension relating to clashes between the ANC and the police, and non-participation by the IFP. The Chairman of the LPC sought the help of COMSA in bringing the IFP back into the LPC. COMSA contacted senior leaders of the IFP who expressed reservations about the LPC. We continued our interaction with the LPC and the IFP leaders. It is gratifying that the IFP has now agreed to attend LPC meetings.

Port Shepstone

An LPC has been in existence at Port Shepstone since March 1992. COMSA's initiatives during the first phase in KwaNdwalane and KwaMavundla and during the second phase in Ezingolweni, detailed in the previous reports, had helped to reduce violence in the area. Regrettably, tensions resurfaced, and the region witnessed many violent incidents during the period under review. COMSA's help was sought by a representative of the LPC. An urgent meeting was called by the LPC on 21 September 1993, after which COMSA visited the KwaNdwalane area. We spoke to local ANC and IFP leaders, and met Chief Ndwalane at his residence on 24 September. Unfortunately, subsequent violent incidents in the area, including the killing of Chief Ndwalane's brother, have proved to be major set-backs. The area will be focal to COMSA's efforts in the forthcoming months.

The PWV region

The East Rand

As described in Chapter 3, although violence has continued to escalate in the PWV region, 80 per cent of this has occurred in the East Rand, and this has been restricted even further to just two townships: Thokoza and Katlehong. This area became the major focus of our attention in the PWV region during the period under review, and also of a joint initiative by the four international observer missions, in consultation with the Wits/Vaal Regional Peace Secretariat, to try to help stem the violence.

The causes of the continued high incidence of violence in the East Rand townships are complex:

- The area has the greatest number of hostels of any of the sub-regions of the PWV: Katlehong – 7, Thokoza – 4, Vosloorus – 8 and Tembisa – 5. These

hostels serve the industrial areas of Alberton, Germiston, Kempton Park and Benoni/Boksburg. They house single men removed from their families, who often remain in the rural areas. These unnatural living conditions, coupled with political factors, have led to a considerable amount of the violence in the PWV area being associated with hostels. Whereas elsewhere in the PWV area – such as Soweto – efforts to conclude peace pacts between hostel dwellers and their neighbours have helped to reduce violence, such efforts are in their infancy in the East Rand, and have so far made little headway.

- Tensions between the ANC and the IFP are particularly high in the East Rand. Thokoza and Katlehong are virtual war zones with large stretches of 'no-go' areas for particular political organisations. Hostel dwellers in Katlehong, many of whom are aligned to the IFP, are trapped inside the hostels unable to get to work because the railway lines have been sabotaged. Township residents in certain sections of Thokoza have been forced to flee their homes due to alleged intimidation and attacks by Thokoza hostel dwellers. On the other hand, Zulu-speaking residents in some sections of Katlehong have been forced to flee their homes by the ANC 'self-defence units'. The presence of a strong PAC contingent in the nearby squatter settlement of Phola Park adds to the political complexities of the area.
- Police/community relations are weak in the East Rand, and have been exacerbated by it being declared an unrest area, giving the police wide powers of detention, in May 1993. As described in Chapter 3, there have been numerous allegations of torture by the police, particularly those stationed at Nyoni Farm, isolated Headquarters of the ISU, and the Political and Violent Crime Investigation Unit, situated outside Vosloorus in Boksburg. The discovery by the Peace Accord's Police Reporting Officer of torture equipment in the possession of the ISU in the East Rand has lent credence to these allegations.

On 6 September – four days after Peace Day – thousands of ANC supporters from the Kathorus (Katlehong/Thokoza/Vosloorus) area marched on the ISU Political and Violent Crime base in Vosloorus. The community demanded the withdrawal of white members of the ISU from the area. Although this is impractical (a view that COMSA conveyed to senior ANC leadership at the time), the demand underscores the tenuous relations between the police and community in the area.

- Commercial rivalry between taxi associations adds to the violence in the area. In October, violence was narrowly averted after local and international observers intervened to defuse a clash between two taxi associations in the town of Germiston. This clash also had political undertones, as the two groups belonged to different political parties.
- Peace structures in the area are weak. At the time that COMSA began the third phase of its work, the IFP had suspended participation in the Germiston/Katlehong LPC due to the murder of the IFP representative

(who was also the vice-chairperson of the LPC) allegedly by ANC elements. His body was subsequently stolen from the mortuary, adding to the anger among IFP supporters.

The chairperson of the Germiston/Katlehong LPC, who had displayed outstanding courage, sustained serious injuries after youths claiming PAC allegiance stabbed her while she was monitoring a rally. For a variety of reasons, this chairperson resigned on 25 August 1993.

A new chairperson has been appointed, and an IFP representative has attended some meetings, although this has been sporadic, due to the security problems he experiences in getting to meetings. While every effort is being made to strengthen the LPC, it remains fragile.

The Thokoza LPC has not had quite the same problems as the Katlehong/Germiston LPC. However, it too has been weakened by the frequent non-attendance by one or other party of crucial meetings, the non-accessibility of the Thokoza office to some residents of the area and frequent personality clashes.

As part of the peace month activities, the Wits/Vaal Regional Peace Secretariat organised two peace conferences to attempt to come to grips with the problems affecting these two townships.

The Thokoza Peace Conference, which was attended by the SAP, IFP, ANC and the civic associations, closed with a programme of action and resolutions to bring peace to the area, covering such aspects as political tolerance, policing of the area, housing and construction, education and peacekeeping.

Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, mainly relating to the political tensions in the area, there has been very little follow-up on these resolutions.

The planned Katlehong peace conference failed to materialise, due to non-attendance by the IFP and the police.

- Difficulties experienced at the Joint Operations Centre: In response to the escalating violence, and in light of the weak local structures, the Wits/Vaal Regional Peace Committee helped to set up a Joint Operations Centre (JOC) at the Natalspruit hospital in Germiston, staffed largely by monitors from the region. The purpose of this centre was to serve as a information gathering base, from which monitors and the ISU could then be sent out to trouble areas. The four international observer groups assisted on a roster basis.

Several problems surfaced with regard to the operations of the JOC. These were partly technical and organisational. In an effort to assist on this front, the CFTC-funded marshal trainer carried out a review of the JOC which was forwarded to all interested parties.

More fundamentally, political parties were often inadequately represented at the JOC and the IFP was often not represented at all. The SAP was

frequently represented by junior ISU officers. On several occasions, local monitors complained that they were harassed by the ISU in the course of their monitoring duties, especially while they were out on patrol in the night in the Regional Peace Secretariat's bullet-proof vehicle, commonly known as the 'iron dove'.

Initiatives by the International Observer Groups

In an effort to offer practical assistance to the peace structures and communities of the East Rand, international observer groups formed an 'East Rand Task Force' comprising representatives of each of the four missions. This task group held a wide range of consultations with chairpersons of the local peace committees in the East Rand; officers of the Regional Peace Secretariat (RPS) involved in the area, and other interest groups. It became apparent to us that:

- unless peace could be achieved, there was no hope of beginning reconstruction in the East Rand;
- achieving this peace rests on the initiative being taken first and foremost by those affected.

While recognising that the local structures in the East Rand are weak, we also felt that in its efforts to assist the area, the RPS may have inadvertently discouraged local initiative.

In the course of several meetings with the RPS on the JOC, the international observer missions encouraged the regional authorities to hand over the operations of this centre to the local peace committees.

The process of decentralising the JOC and strengthening the LPCs in the area is currently in progress. A number of additional and follow-up measures will need to be taken. These might include:

- regular attendance by regional officials and international observers of LPC meetings, and continued encouragement of all parties to participate.
- renewed efforts to convene peace conferences in the area. In this context we welcome the pledge by the IFP and ANC, at a meeting at the RPS office in early December, to begin a series of consultations aimed at achieving peace in the East Rand.
- the revival of community meetings, such as used to be held in Katlehong/Germiston, at which LPC members interacted with the community and helped them understand the functions of the LPCs. Although the peace structures are better known than they used to be, in troubled areas like the East Rand their conciliation and mediation functions are little understood.
- the development of police/community relations subcommittees in all the East Rand LPCs.
- we have followed with interest newspaper reports of possible joint patrols of the East Rand by the SAP, ANC, IFP and PAC. We strongly support this forward-looking concept which could be the precursor to an integrated

police and defence force. In addition, we hope that the East Rand will be a major focus of the new National Peacekeeping Force (NPKF), which we discuss in Chapter 7.

- a concerted effort is required to resolve the issue of evicted home-owners and refugees in the East Rand. This may require that legal assistance be made available through the peace structures.
- once sufficient calm is restored, we recommend that the SERD make the East Rand a priority. We are convinced that resources can be raised from local business sources and the international community for socio-economic reconstruction and development in the area. However, this needs to be co-ordinated by one body, in close consultation with the local community.

The Vaal

In our last report, we cited the Vaal triangle as one of the most tense areas in the PWV region. Since then, the situation in this area – associated in the public mind with many of the worst massacres in South Africa, like Boipatong and Sebokeng – has shown signs of improvement.

According to figures provided to COMSA by the SAP, the number of deaths peaked in April and May 1993, when 55 and 72 people were killed. In August, September and October, the number of people killed declined to 35, 53 and 32 respectively. The Human Rights Commission estimates that of the latter, seven were politically motivated murders.

During the period under review, COMSA, along with the other international observer missions, continued its efforts to strengthen the Vaal Local Peace Committee, through regular attendance of its meetings, those of its subcommittees, and the several workshops that have been held in the area.

Police/community relations in the area, which we highlighted in our last report as being among the worst in the region, have shown some improvement, although many of the underlying suspicions remain.

The death in custody of an IFP member Victor Kheswa caused disquiet both in the IFP (whose pathologist claimed that he had not died of natural causes, as stated by the police) and the ANC (which alleged that he had been deliberately killed to cover up police involvement in the several counts of murder for which he was to be tried).

The latter theory was compounded by the death days later of one of the accused in the Boipatong massacre after he allegedly jumped out of a moving police van taking him to an identity parade, and was run over by a police van following behind. The driver of the van was the same officer as had been temporarily suspended in connection with the Kheswa case.

Hundreds of complaints of police misconduct in the Vaal have been brought to the attention of the Police Reporting Officer for the Wits/Vaal area.

Suspicions surrounding the police handling of the Sebokeng massacre, to

which we refer in our last report, prompted the LPC, supported by international observer missions including COMSA, to request that the case be handled by police from outside the area.

A compromise reached with the Deputy Attorney-General at a meeting in Pretoria in August gave the Police Reporting Officer a considerable hand in monitoring the investigation. An assistant attorney-general was put in charge of ensuring that the investigation is being properly handled. At the time of writing, nine people had been arrested in connection with at least 60 killings in Sebokeng.

The police/community relations subcommittee of the LPC has helped to reduce some of the earlier tensions, as has the interest shown in the area by the Police Reporting Officer. Following an investigation by this Officer, the SAP agreed to disband its notorious 'Yankee Squad', seen by township residents as a major source of violence in the area.

COMSA attended a two-day workshop on police-community relations in the Vaal convened and facilitated by the Institute for Democratic Alternatives in South Africa (IDASA) in October. All major players in the region attended the workshop, where the SAP and ISU explained their role in maintaining peace.

At the end of the workshop, the participants resolved to establish and maintain an interim facilitation committee to co-ordinate the setting up of local police/community forums in various parts of the Vaal Triangle, including Sharpeville, Sebokeng, Boipatong and six other townships.

In an unexpected move, but one which underscores the improving relations between the police and community in the area, the municipality of Sebokeng, a predominantly ANC-supporting area, offered the freedom of Sebokeng to the deputy commissioner of police for the region in November.

Relations between the ANC and IFP in the Vaal continue to be tense, although their participation in the LPC has helped to defuse some potential conflict. During the period under review, COMSA, along with other international observers, monitored a funeral in which an IFP official was buried – after much negotiation – in the predominantly ANC area of Evaton.

Soon after our departure, the body was exhumed and burnt by ANC youth. After further protracted negotiation, a second funeral was held.

A potential conflict was averted in November when, after similarly complex negotiations, the IFP agreed not to bury one of its supporters in a predominantly ANC area, and instead held the funeral in the largely white town of Vereeniging.

The Vaal LPC has laboured under numerous other pressures. In July, the ANC and its allies withdrew from the LPC, citing their dissatisfaction with the attitude of the police towards the investigation of the Sebokeng massacre.

It took several weeks after the LPC had been to see the Deputy Attorney-General (as mentioned above) for the ANC to come back into the LPC.

This considerably hampered the work of the committee. COMSA, along with other international observers, drew this issue to the attention of senior ANC leaders.

Since the ANC's return, it has alleged that improper procedures were followed in appointing a field-worker, and demanded that the field-worker and chairperson step down. At the time of writing, this issue had not been resolved.

We strongly urge that these sorts of issues be addressed as soon as possible, and in a constructive manner. For all the difficulties it has faced, the Vaal LPC has been one of the stronger peace structures in the PWV region. Its efforts have undoubtedly been a major factor in the reduction of violence in the area.

The volatile mix of factors that could lead to an explosion of violence in the area – especially in the months of heightened political activity ahead – has not disappeared. Local peace structures will need to remain particularly vigilant.

Alexandra

COMSA has continued to support the commendable efforts of the Alexandra Interim Crisis Committee (ICC) in consolidating the fragile peace that has been achieved there.

We have regularly attended meetings of the ICC and its subcommittees, as well as numerous events organised by the committee to spread the message of peace to the community.

Since our last report, the tide has perhaps turned in Alexandra from trying to prevent acts of violence toward solid peacemaking.

A year and a half ago, a near-war was raging between the ANC and IFP supporters in the community. 'No-go' areas were controlled by one or other of the parties and thousands of people were forced to flee their homes.

Today the burnt out shells of their homes remain in the area known as 'Beirut'. Returning these 'displacees' to rebuilt homes remains the most intractable problem being tackled by the ICC. Progress on this issue has been painfully slow but there has been progress. Committees are hard at work and discussions have reached the stage where demolition and reconstruction details are under active consideration.

The peace structures in the community are also in the process of undergoing a transformation.

The ICC, which was formed on 1 April 1992, falls under the National Peace Accord. However, from the outset it has emphasised socio-economic reconstruction as being a vital goal if peace is to be achieved.

The ICC and its subcommittees, security, socio-economic development and communication, have been meeting weekly and are action-oriented.

For example, the Security Task Group was quick to establish a 24-hour monitoring patrol service a few months ago when violence erupted on the East Rand and in the neighbouring township of Tembisa. The Joint Community Monitoring Centre (JCMC) includes members of the two main political parties and the security forces working together. The JCMC patrols are a visible presence on the streets of Alexandra and have played an important role in preventing violence.

In December, after lengthy negotiations that underscored the political tensions beneath the surface in the township, the ICC formally became a Local Peace Committee (LPC). It is hoped that the Alexandra LPC will continue to consolidate the peace and reconstruction efforts in the community.