Lesson learned from RJ experiences in Africa and in Latin America

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Community language on restorative justice must be understood and listened to. The community’s distress must be taken into serious consideration. Fragile communities and unbearable trauma are key considerations.
When RJ is a **community process**...

- Reconciliation is both a goal and a methodology.
- Be prepared to significantly soften the traditional definitions of culprits, offenders, victims, lawyers, witnesses, judges.
There is no hope of effective facilitation of RJ, if the advocacy or the preparation were wrong or inaccurate.

- The arguments that RJ is better, cheaper, more just, more effective, etc. are weak mindset changers for a wounded community.
- The most important and most attractive mindset changer is listening as long and as much the community wants.
- Welcome the community coming-outs, even if they look wrongful.
Remember: RJ is about **Justice AND Peace**, it is neither justice **or** peace, nor justice **vs** peace

If preconditions of peace are not accepted and guaranteed, there is no way to initiate a RJ process. An aborted RJ process hurts much more than a delayed one.

In every stage of a RJ process, there is no room for outsiders, and most of all no room for any show of force or of enforcement.
Rebuilding community’s TRUST in the local justice system

- Do not assume that everybody or the majority of the community understand RJ.
- Do not choose protagonists/facilitators who are not believers and evangelists of RJ.
- All real and just justice is local.
- Truth comes first. Do not tolerate nuanced truth.
- Guarantee intellectual honesty when telling what happened.
- Dishonest explanations are counter-effective and destroy any RJ process, beyond the single attempt.
- Build accountability, engage in dealing with consequences of crime.
- Invest time, money and effort in making good of damage done.
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