

# From Defence to Development

REDIRECTING MILITARY RESOURCES  
IN SOUTH AFRICA



Edited by Jeddyn Dock and Penny Mokhele

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## FROM DEFENCE TO DEVELOPMENT

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*Redirecting Military Resources in South Africa*

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Jacklyn Cock and Penny Mckenzie  
*for The Group for Environmental Monitoring*

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## MILITARISED YOUTH

### Political Pawns or Social Agents?

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*Monique Marks and Penny Mckenzie*

The militarisation of South African society in the 1980s was not confined to formal state security structures and their personnel. The potent combination of state repression and the consequent insurrectionary struggle resulted in high levels of militarisation in civil society. The process of militarisation affected South Africa's youth who, in the 1980s, actively participated in revolutionary struggle and consequently became the target of state violence.<sup>1</sup> The youth perceived themselves as key agents of social and political change, and as defenders of their communities against repressive security forces. During this period, the police were unwilling and unable to work in black communities and ensure their safety. Alternative forms of policing arose and youth were central to these structures. Many received some form of paramilitary training by armed formations such as uMkhonto weSizwe.

Despite the election of a democratic government in 1994, youth continue to be involved in a variety of defence structures, some of which are highly organised.<sup>2</sup> Many of the defence structures lack political leadership and guidance, and some have been infiltrated by criminal elements (Raditapole & Gillespie, 1994:11). They continue to perceive themselves as protecting their communities from outside threats. But despite their historic and current role they have been marginalised from political and social processes. Political parties which initially took responsibility for defence structures of this kind have distanced themselves from them, and the Minister of Safety and Security has indicated that paramilitary groups will be banned (*Business Day*, 6 August 1996).

Militarised youth are a neglected social group who need to be targeted for reintegration into society. This is critical to South Africa, which has emerged from a period of low-intensity conflict into one of reconstruction and development. Stability and security are necessary for development to succeed. But the process of change is potentially threatened by youth in defence structures who are armed and unac-

<sup>1</sup>. This chapter focuses on youth who were members of or perceived themselves to be part of the social movement aligned to the politics of the ANC, both while it was banned and when it was unbanned. Interviews were conducted in 1995 with leaders of SDUs in Soweto, Alexandra, East Rand, North East Rand, Pretoria, West Rand and the Vaal. Interviews were also conducted with key informants in non-governmental organisations who were working with militarised youth, and key informants in police and military intelligence.

<sup>2</sup>. While most public attention has been focused on structures of defence, it is crucial to recognise that there are large numbers of youth who continue to perceive themselves as defenders, but are not organised into these seemingly aboveground struc-



tures. Individual youths in the townships continue to be armed and participate in a range of violent activities, some of which are criminal. In areas such as Alexandra and Pretoria, there are no formal, identifiable defence structures. This does *not* mean that a large proportion of youth in these areas are neither armed nor participate in what they believe to be the defence of their communities.

countable. Militarised youth pose a potential threat to security unless demilitarisation programmes are developed to address their needs. These would include assisting them to devise alternative methods to deal with conflict and to reformulate their identities by offering alter-native experiences and skills to those of defenders of the community . Such programmes would include job creation, education and training, and psychological services aimed at providing youth with skills and opportunities to contribute positively to society.

This chapter provides an overview of the involvement of youth in defence structures in the 1980s and 1990s, explores their aspirations and goals, and examines the prospects of demilitarisation.

## ***Defence structures in the 1980s***

The 1980s were a critical turning point in South Africa's political history. There was massive intensification of the struggle against the apartheid state, and the urban terrain was a key site of struggle. By 1984, there was an upsurge of resistance in most urban townships. From 1985 to 1989, the state attempted to crush resistance through states of emergency, banning organisations, censoring the media, and detaining and killing activists. It was the youth who were most active during this period and primarily targeted by the state.

Both the state and civil society became increasingly militarised. Violence was seen as an effective means of achieving change (on the part of state opponents) or crushing resistance (on the part of the state). Mann defines the mindset which accompanies the process of militarisation as a set of attitudes and social practices which regards war and the preparation for war as a normal and desirable social activity (Mann, 1987:71).

Militarism became rooted in black and white communities, albeit in differing ways. The repressive actions of the state gave rise to confrontational politics and political violence. The African National Congress (ANC), as the leading organisation of the liberation movement, called for a strategy of ungovernability and people's power at its Kabwe Conference in 1985. The aim of the campaign was to render organs of government inoperable through mass action or violent opposition. Revolutionary militarism became part of the discourse and practice of political organisations engaged in war with the state. Oliver Tambo, then president of the ANC, stated in a well-distributed speech in South Africa that:

Pretoria has carried out its murderous plans to extreme. We must now respond to the reactionary violence of the enemy with our own revolutionary violence. The weapons are there in white houses. Each white house has a gun or two hidden inside to use against us. Our mothers work in their kitchens. We work in their



*SDU member in Thokoza on the East Rand (Photo by Themba Hadebe)*

gardens. We must deliberately go out to look for these weapons in these houses. It is a matter of life and death to find these weapons to use against the enemy . . . The lone policeman must be made a target. He must be destroyed so that we can get his weapon . . . We must learn to lay ambushes for the armoured personnel carriers and the police cars that patrol the locations.<sup>3</sup>

Township youth in particular heeded Tambo's call and spearheaded the intensification of the revolutionary struggle. They identified themselves as energetic, flexible people who were the country's future. As a result, they saw it as their responsibility to use any means possible to ensure a democratic dispensation. While making use of confrontational politics in legal political organisations like the UDF, they were simultaneously engaged in organised political violence in more elusive underground formations.

It is within this context that defence structures arose, as a response to state harassment by the security forces, to inadequate, partisan policing and to the perceived illegitimacy of the justice system. Local communities became active in alternative forms of policing and structures of justice. Most of these activities were co-ordinated by local civic structures which comprised street, zonal and area committees, whose members were responsible for patrolling the streets and areas in which they were situated. These structures were simultaneously responsible for the organisation of insurrection and for identifying

<sup>3</sup>. This quote is taken from a tape that was widely distributed among youth activists in the 1980s and early 1990s. It is part of an opening address given by Oliver Tambo at the ANC's Kabwe Conference in 1985.

and punishing individuals or groupings believed to have committed crimes such as theft, murder and rape. Crimes committed against fellow members of the community were seen as dividing the community, and were regarded as unacceptable in a period when solidarity and unity were the keys to fighting the apartheid state.

Initially, methods of defence were simple and rudimentary. Resistance was given mainly by setting up barricades and foot patrols, as well as digging trenches to slow down or prohibit the movement of Security Force vehicles. Their weaponry was rudimentary and unsophisticated, what today are commonly referred to as traditional weapons (Motumi, 1994:7).

Youth played a critical role in these defence activities and participated in forms of collective violence which can broadly be termed political . Objects of political violence could include anyone or anything regarded as hindering the goal of liberation and the quest for unity. Gangsters, criminals and counter-revolutionary forces, such as Inkatha, became targets of collective action. Youth involvement in all this served to deepen their identity as defenders of the community , both physically and morally. This identity has prevailed subsequent to the negotiation process and the democratic elections in April 1994.

### ***Shifts in the 1990s***

The 1990s witnessed the decline of the youth movement, largely owing to the commencement of negotiations. These were conducted by national representatives of political parties, with almost no input from activists at a local level.

The unbanning of the ANC and its approach to armed struggle and the lack of consultation, alienated old activists. Activists became demoralised. These people had been committed to a seizure of power. The transition to the ANC had an effect on activists trained in a particular climate. <sup>4</sup>

Youth centrally engaged in the activities of people s war and ungovernability were not convinced by the ANC s new stance on negotiations and the suspension of armed struggle. As the 1990s proceeded, youth found themselves less and less central to the processes of transformation. In the early 1990s, very few political opportunities existed for youth to play a meaningful role in transition. In addition, key leaders of the 1980s left local youth organisations, their departure creating a leadership vacuum. New, less politically astute and disciplined youth constituted the social base of youth structures, and it proved difficult to organise and to instil the sense of discipline held by youth activists of the 1980s. The *comtsotsi* phenomenon (criminal elements who operated under the name of political organisations for their own personal gain) surged during this period. Collective action, including collective violence, became increasingly disorganised and unaccountable.

4. Interview with Mogamotsi Mogadire, a key youth activist in Soweto in the 1980s and early 1990s. Mogadire was a member of the National Executive Committee of the ANCYL at the time of the interview in 1993 (Marks, 1993).

The negotiation process itself was not uncomplicated or peaceful. In fact, the period 1990-4 was characterised by high levels of violence, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng. Much of this violence was inter-community, particularly between members of the IFP and the ANC. There were also numerous attacks on local communities by groupings of unknown, armed men. These became known as the *third force* and were allegedly organised and trained by the security forces intent on derailing the negotiation process – allegations that Truth Commission investigations have proved to have substance.

The severity and frequency of attacks, combined with the continued repressive role played by the security forces and inter-community violence, forced local communities to develop their own self-defence initiatives. Again, it was youth who were at the forefront. Self-Defence Units (SDUs) were meant to have a special command and control system, and paramilitary configuration, and members were to be trained by the military wing of the ANC, *uMkhonto weSizwe* (MK). During this period [early 1990s], the role of the SDUs seemed clearly defined – to defend the communities against the hostel dwellers, mainly seen to be IFP-controlled, and the Security Forces, especially the Internal Stability Unit (Motumi, 1994:8).

IFP supporters formed their own defence structures called Self-Protection Units (SPUs). There were also smaller groups of youth who were members of similar formations organised by AZAPO and the PAC. SDUs and SPUs mushroomed throughout South Africa, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal, the Western Cape and Gauteng. In the period following their formation, these units were, for the most part, accountable to local political structures. However, as the negotiation



*Residents fleeing civil unrest in Thokoza, 1990 (Photo by Avigail Uzi)*

process proceeded, and with the consequent formation of the Government of National Unity, political parties began to reassess the role and function of such structures. The ANC Youth League (ANCYL) in Gauteng, for example, publicly stated in early 1994 that defence units should be completely disbanded. The ANC argued that members of defence units should, as far as possible, become police reservists or form recognised and legitimate neighbourhood watches. For the most part, the inclusion of defence unit members into police reservist programmes has proved unsuccessful, both because of the lack of SAPS initiatives and capacity, and the desire by many defence unit members for payment for police-related activities.

### ***Defence structures after April 1994***

Despite the election of a democratic, ANC-led government, dramatic decreases in political violence (except in KwaZulu-Natal), and the stated intention of the SAP to become more accountable and community-oriented, youth defence structures continued to operate.

Peace, or at least the long-term guarantee thereof, is not only the curbing of violence or the absence of war, it is the availability and provision of food, health facilities, education, water, housing, electricity, transportation, security, and the promotion and adherence of fundamental human rights. These strengthen democracy, particularly at the grassroots level. The April election did not bring complete peace, nor end conflict (Rakgoadi, 1995:8).

Inequality and deprivation are still experienced by youth at a local level. The RDP, while facing the mammoth task of redistribution, has moved relatively slowly in addressing the problems confronted by the majority of black South Africans. For many young people, the only way of achieving any real change, or receiving attention from the state, is through acts of collective violence. These were often conducted in the name of defence structures. For example, Soweto SDU members from Diepkloof marched to the Orlando police station on 23 July 1995, and demanded integration into the SAPS. Representatives stated: If it means turning to violence and wreaking havoc in order for our grievances to be addressed, then we will do just that. We have done it before, and we got listened to. Nothing can stop us from doing it again (*The Star*, 24 July 1995).

The much-needed change process within the SAPS has also been slow. The partisan and repressive nature of policing in the past, combined with current inefficiencies in dealing with crime, means that some youth continue to play the role of an alternative police service. This is problematic since they are not formally trained as police personnel; their training is mostly paramilitary. In some instances they

## LAYING FOUNDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

In 1984, a group of young schoolboys from Bonteheuwel in the Western Cape decided to form a self-defence unit to protect themselves and their community against the security police. The average age of the boys was 15. Thirteen years later, many former members of the Bonteheuwel Military Wing (BMW) are jobless and without educational qualifications. Some are homeless or addicted to drugs, and others have turned to gangsterism to survive.

Yet, a number of former BMW members are gaining strength by coming to terms with their past and restructuring their lives through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Breakthrough Course. According to facilitator Peter Griffiths, the course is designed to help people discover and reach for what is really important in their lives. It encourages participants to wipe the slate clean and start thinking in a new, more personally inspired way.

According to ex-BMW member, Faried Ferhelst, . . . each and every person [in BMW] had many tragic experiences under the apartheid regime . He says, since 1990, when BMW disbanded, surviving members have been struggling to deal with the trauma of spending their teenage years battling for ourselves, our families, our communities and our nation .

Our lives were so profoundly affected, that we still find it difficult to integrate ourselves in the new society. For many of us the scars of torture and imprisonment are not only physical. For most of us, it is difficult to create and sustain fulfilling and satisfying lives.

Ferhelst, who has suffered nightmares since 1982, has found a way through the Breakthrough Course. You re-experience things from your past things you re trying to bury. It teaches you how to deal and come to terms with your past.

Before he joined BMW at 14, Ferhelst was enrolled at a school for gifted children. On joining BMW, he went on the run from the police. He lived on the streets and often slept outside without cover. His mother left food and clothing for him at safe houses.

Ferhelst was a founder member of the Bonteheuwel Veterans Association (BVA) whose purpose is to empower and rebuild the members of the BMW, our families and the community . The BVA s vision includes finding practical ways to provide homes, employment, education and support to ex-BMW members.

Ferhelst says minimal support has been offered to Bonteheuwel s veterans by the current leadership and government. The concluding sentiment of a document he co-wrote about the background of the BVA is expressed thus: It would indeed be a continued injustice and crime against humanity for these courageous persons to be neglected and overlooked, given the committed lives they have led.

(Edited version of an article by Daisy Jones in *The Star*, 14 March 1997)

are the perpetrators of crime and are part of gang formations. Nonetheless, the youth derive a sense of identity and purpose through their policing activities .

There are several problems associated with the defence structures. These include the infiltration of criminal elements, the proliferation of sophisticated weaponry, violent clashes within and between SDUs, their ambivalent relationship with the SAPS, and their potential to disrupt developmental processes in broader society.

The infiltration of criminals is a major problem facing defence structures: at least half of the youth currently involved in SDUs were on the fringes of criminal activity prior to joining the SDU, and may continue such activity outside the jurisdiction of the particular township they protect. This indicates the emergence of a new dominance of criminal, and often gang-related, activity under the aegis of community protection (Raditapole & Gillespie, 1994:11).

Several cases of tensions within and between defence structures have been reported, some of which have resulted in violent conflict. For example, in Doornkop, Soweto, there was a power struggle for control over the SDU unit. It was alleged that members had joined the National Party and were being used to destabilise the community.<sup>5</sup> On the East Rand there were numerous incidents of in-fighting between SDU members, some of which resulted in deaths.<sup>6</sup>

There were also tensions between the police and the defence structures. For example, in Katorus,<sup>7</sup> clashes took place between SDU members from Mandela section in Tokoza and Twala section in Katlehong, which led to the death of two SDU members (*The Star*, 1 May 1995). Some of these youth were paid reservists of the SAPS.<sup>8</sup> They had firearms from the police service, which several kept in their personal possession while off duty. A number followed lines of police authority while on duty, yet followed SDU commands while off duty. At times, the two lines of command conflicted.<sup>9</sup> As a result, in many townships people have recognised the need to include defence structures as important community groupings in the newly established community policing forums, as a way of regulating the relationship between the two bodies.

These problems mean that defence structures have the potential to destabilise society and undermine the RDP. An informant who works with militarised youth asserts that disillusioned youth are the greatest threat to safety and security in our country. This is a known fact but has not been made a priority by the government to date. This problem needs to be firmly placed on the national agenda. <sup>10</sup>

Critical to developing appropriate programmes for militarised youth is an understanding of their hopes for the future.

5. Interview with Crooks Mhlopo, a member of the executive committee of the Soweto sub-region of the ANCYL.

6. Interview with Jabu Dlamini in March 1995. At the time of the interview, Dlamini was a field worker at Peace Action. Her work was mainly centred on the East Rand. Dlamini is currently working closely with defence units for the Central Methodist Mission.

7. Katorus is a section of the East Rand consisting of the townships of Tokoza, Katlehong and Vosloorus.

8. As part of the Presidential Lead Project in Katorus, youth from defence structures have been integrated into the SAPS as reservists. They are the only paid reservists in the country.

9. In some areas the two structures work harmoniously on the assumption that both are necessary to ensure safety and security. For example, SDU members in Ivory Park on the East Rand work closely with the police.

10. Interview with Eldred de Klerk from the Centre for Conflict Resolution in the Western Cape, March 1995.

## ***Goals and aspirations of militarised youth***

During 1995, a central theme which emerged in interviews with members of youth defence structures in Gauteng was that they feel disregarded by the new government. As Rakgodi has stated, 'the liberators of yesterday have become today's rejects or social outcasts' (Rakgodi 1991:7). The Rev. H. Dandala of the Central Methodist Mission, who has worked extensively with SDU and SPU structures in the Katorus area, noted the following in a memorandum sent to the MEC for Safety and Security, Jessie Duarte, in February 1995: 'The cry for someone to care for them is critical. I believe that if such a person were from the government structures it would help them not to feel that the status they enjoyed and the contribution they made are being ignored as worthless . . . the crisis of having no immediate income is making itself severely felt in their predicament.'

The youth interviewed expressed similar concerns. The key issues raised were:

While the majority of members of these structures wanted to become members of the police service, their main concern was for some form of employment which would generate income. As Kiba Kekane stated about youth in defence structures in his area:

The armed forces seem to be the only place for these youth. Since these youth have played such a key role in defence activities (whether defined in military or policing terms), their participation in reservist programmes should be explored where possible. However, youth themselves do not necessarily want to enter into the security forces but are unaware of other opportunities. Many do not necessarily want to become part of the security forces. However, no alternative was given. People are not able to think beyond their limits. The same relates to ex-MK members. Many do not want to be in the military, but there were no alternatives. Most youth want marriage and cars, they want to develop as young adults.<sup>11</sup>

The dire need for employment was directly linked to the need for education and training programmes for youths. We want skills that at some point will lead to employment. Members want to further their vocational opportunities in some way or another. Any course they do should have a certificate which is of value in terms of job seeking. <sup>12</sup>

While many members of defence units felt that they were too old to go back to school, several wanted an opportunity to pursue formal education. We want to be educated and have the opportunity to go back to school. People want to further their studies. <sup>13</sup> The

<sup>11</sup>. Interview with Kiba Kekane, Get Ahead Foundation, Pretoria, 1995.

<sup>12</sup>. Interview with Tsephe Molla in February 1995. At the time of the interview, Molla was the chief commander of the SDUs in the Vaal area.

<sup>13</sup>. Interview with Thandi Mhobo and Boyce Maneli in March 1995. Mhobo was the treasurer, and Maneli the deputy chairperson of the Lusaka branch of the ANC on the West Rand, near Krugersdorp. Both Mhobo and Maneli were active participants in SDUs.



need for basic adult education was strongly conveyed. It would seem that, for those youth who are illiterate, basic adult education would be the most appropriate starting point. <sup>14</sup>

Most of the young people interviewed had a poor track record in formal schooling. Most had some level of secondary education, but only a very small minority had matric certification. While many people lack formal educational experience, they possess a number of important skills which need to be recognised in developing programmes. These include negotiating, communication and organisational skills, and often insightful understanding of power relations and community needs and problems.

Many youth were both perpetrators and victims of violence. Consequently, they experienced severe trauma and were in need of psychological counselling. Dandala expressed strong views on this:

Clearly a process aimed at helping communities to reach appropriate closure on the past (as opposed to the denial that we currently see) will need to operate at both a macro and a micro level. In communities where violence has been particularly protracted and intense, we can perhaps look at individualised solutions, such as the establishment of individual and group counselling programmes. At a community level, it is my strong contention that community leaders should go through a programme aimed at providing basic counselling skills as well as information about the available social services and resources to which people can be referred.<sup>15</sup>

It has been suggested that youth from defence units be trained in peer counselling and assisted in setting up their own advice centres to help the community.

In undertaking any work with these young people, attention needs to be given to both the historical role they have played in their communities and their self-identities as defenders of the community. As an ANCYL executive member in Soweto stated: The only reason why SDU members want to become part of the police is because they believe they have been doing police work for many years. Part of their identity is as defence workers. <sup>16</sup> This identity was important and was central to their daily lives. They had given up their time, energy and even schooling opportunities for what they believed to be in the best interest of the broader community. Consequently, there was reluctance from the youth to relinquish this identity:

Commanders are reluctant to give up the roles they have played within their communities. The requirement that they project themselves into a future in which they are not commanders

14. Interview with Musi Ziqubu, a member of the defence committee of the ANC in Alexandra, in February 1995.

15. Memorandum by the Rev. H. Dandala to Gauteng's Minister of Safety and Security in February 1995.

16. Interview with Crooks Mhlopo in February 1995

implied the loss of this identity (and all that comes with it) with no clear sense of what might replace it. It seemed to me that this prospective loss also resonated with the multitude of losses that these men have already experienced. What emerged was a sense that the contribution that they had made to the past (and the losses and sacrifices that this had required) was not recognised and that in the quest for a new future there was no opportunity to come to grips with and mourn the losses of the past.<sup>17</sup>

These expressed hopes need to be viewed in the context of a society in the midst of demilitarisation, which includes the rightsizing of the SANDF and restructuring the SAPS.<sup>18</sup> This means it is unlikely that these youth will be incorporated into security structures and they therefore need to be encouraged to consider alternative employment.

### ***The future of defence structures***

Paramilitary formations will be banned, yet this is unlikely to lead to the cessation of such formations. This chapter has identified some of the key reasons why defence structures persist. What will hasten their demise is the creation of a legitimate and representative police service, the provision of effective and accountable policing, and a decrease in inter-community violence.

The most effective mechanism for disbanding defence structures is the provision of comprehensive programmes which address the needs of youth. These programmes should take as their starting point the aims and aspirations of young people. Educational, psychological and employment opportunities must be integrated into the programmes. Cognisance needs to be taken of the role that youths have played in defending their communities and their resistance to giving up deeply entrenched identities. However, these programmes should aim to demilitarise the youth by assisting them to develop alternative ways of dealing with conflict and reshaping their identities.

There are many thousands of young people who actively engage in collective violence, which they deem to be defensive. While the youth were once portrayed as key social and political agents, they are not given enough attention by those involved in development programmes. Once mobilised by key political organisations, defence structures are now being disowned. This is not surprising given their potential to undermine peace processes and development. This is why providing programmes must be a central part of any demilitarisation agenda in South Africa.

<sup>17</sup>. Memorandum by the Rev. H. Dandala, 1995.

<sup>18</sup>. As noted in greater detail in chapter 8, in April 1996 the SANDF agreed to integrate 5 000 former SPU members by the end of 1997. Informal interview with Stability Ngema, commander of KwaZulu-Natal SPUs. This inclusion is an anomaly and arises out of a political compromise between the SANDF and the IFP. Similar initiatives are unlikely to occur again.

## THE PEACE CORPS

### *Adèle Kirsten*

I was really disappointed at not getting a gun when I first joined the Peace Corps, said Desmond Radebe, a community peace worker in Daveyton on the East Rand. Desmond was one of the first 100 recruits from Daveyton who were trained as community peace workers in January 1994, by the Wits Vaal Peace Secretariat. Three years later, he is still with the Peace Corps, serving the community as an unarmed community peace worker.

There were high levels of violence and political conflict in the period prior to the 1994 general elections. One solution mooted by the Wits Vaal Peace Secretariat was to train community-based peace monitors whose primary function was violence reduction. Daveyton became the pilot project to test this idea.

In 1994, the Peace Corps was established to facilitate community-based, non-violent conflict resolution. The Peace Corps is based in Gauteng, with projects in Bekkersdal, Daveyton and Sebokeng. The projects are funded by USAID and the Danish government. Trainees are recruited from political organisations and from local structures such as churches, civics, youth organisations and peace structures. They have to be under the age of 35, resident in the community and unemployed.

Over a period of four weeks, they are trained in mediation, crisis intervention and management, crowd control, first aid, radio communication, personal development and self-discipline. In-service training continues during the year of service. Trainees are encouraged to identify where their interest lies and the skills they would like to develop. A range of choices is available, such as computer training, driving classes, carpentry and bricklaying, forklifting, lay counselling, gardening, welding and child care. Training is contracted out to various service providers in the private and non-governmental sectors. One of the aims of training is to facilitate dialogue between political groups and to give young people an opportunity to work and live together.

Community peace workers are the eyes and ears of the community. They monitor, manage and intervene in a range of conflict situations, such as political violence, family and domestic violence, school disputes and taxi violence. It is hoped that they promote a culture of peace through encouraging political tolerance and encouraging people to resolve conflict through non-violent means. An important aspect of their work is facilitating access to social workers, priests, emergency services and the police. The relationship between the community and the police is improving and strengthening as a result.

Community peace workers also provide services like first aid and traffic control outside schools. A particularly valuable service is the monitoring of pension pay points and escorting pensioners home. Sometimes the community peace workers will get involved in community development projects such as clean-up campaigns. They played a critical role in monitoring the 1994 general elections and the 1995 local elections.

During the consultation to establish the Peace Corps in Daveyton, many people questioned the wisdom of having unarmed community peace workers. Desmond recalls the long battles and the constant refrain, Surely the Peace Corps is there to defend our communities against violence from unknown forces from the third

force? Although Desmond had decided to try out the Peace Corps, he did not give up asking, during his training and in the early days of service, 'Why are we not armed?' Now he is happy to be unarmed. What had changed? After a while I realised that I did not need a gun. I now know that the community needs us and values us.

A survey conducted by the Community Agency for Social Enquiry in late 1994 revealed that many of the Daveyton residents had made use of the Peace Corps to provide security, to ensure crowd control and to mediate in times of crisis and conflict. There is a widespread awareness in the community of the Peace Corps and their daily patrolling. Daveyton residents now consider their community peace workers an indispensable part of their lives.

The Peace Corps has given militarised youth the opportunity to redefine their identities and acquire new skills. As Desmond commented, 'The initial four weeks training really helped me to get to know people from the other side other people's political parties; but what was most important was how some of the course taught me self-esteem. I remained an active SDU member for about three months after joining the Peace Corps and then it was no longer necessary. I still feel that I am defending my community, but in a positive way people come to us and ask us for help. I could not live at home, because I had been fighting. Now I can go home and stay with my mother.'