

Preface

South Africa's current economic and social woes may well be the result of too little reconciliation and not, as some claim, too much of it. They may be the result, in part at least, of increasing alienation and fragmentation within and between key role-players in the country as South Africa continues its arduous trek from truth to justice. Having faced our past through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) process and Mandela's emphasis on reconciliation, we are yet to turn, decisively and together, towards a future where the dignity of all would be recognised. For this to become reality, South Africans would need to work together much more closely, rather than allowing historical divides or emergent conflicts to set the tone.

The need for co-operation on a mutually affirming basis, for tackling together some of the more resilient challenges, has never been cast in starker contrast than in 2012. This has been a turbulent year for the country and the rest of the world. The social implications of the global financial crisis some years back have become increasingly explicit in the form of social unrest and political violence internationally.

In these difficult conditions there are indications that South Africa may be ceding ground to its competitors – precisely because of divisions within the government, the unions, business and even civil society.

Such fragmentation does not generate much grassroots trust that things will get better, nor does it make for effective problem-solving or social development. It was, therefore, not surprising when South African miners, truck drivers, farm labourers and several other sectors, no longer willing to compromise on what they regard as unfairly low wages, embarked on rolling mass action throughout this tumultuous year. At the August 16 confrontation on Lonmin's platinum operation in Marikana, the South African police responded with excessive force, killing 34 miners. Memories of the TRC were evoked as a presidential commission of inquiry began to hold public hearings into the tragedy, the relatives of victims belatedly in attendance. Indeed, the Marikana Commission's motto, 'Truth, Restoration, Justice', closely mirrors the TRC mandate.

Within this context, the familiar acrimonious build-up to another ANC elective conference took place amidst major disruptions of provincial conferences in the Western Cape and Limpopo and even the occasional threat of political assassination. At the time of writing, there is still some uncertainty about how ANC politics will play itself out at and after the

party's national conference in Mangaung. While most South Africans look on, the personality politics in the ANC have gone hand in hand with a growing concern about levels of corruption in government and state structures.

Interestingly, however, this troubling environment has made for the emergence of several new, dynamic social movements and organisations. As long as the judiciary remains independent and effective, the media relatively free and vocal, and civil society vigorous, one feels that the current national malaise could be reversed.

However, if democratic gains were reversed instead, South Africa's future prospects would deteriorate significantly. Happily, the resolve to oppose such reversal of hard-fought democratic rights remains a source of major civic activity in South Africa. This does not make South Africa an easier country to govern, but perhaps a much more transparent and potentially fair society than would have been the case if these limits to power were not observed.

On another positive note, this year saw the publication of the important National Development Plan for 2030. At the heart of this plan is a vision of a better future for South African youth, black and white. The Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) has been working closely with the key role-players in the commission to help ensure that the recommendations acquire the necessary momentum to effect real change.

How we deal with the challenges listed above will have long-term consequences. When we respond, we should reflect on how our actions undermine or strengthen the prospects of a younger generation that unavoidably will inherit the consequences of our current policies. It is for this reason that the focus of this year's *Transformation Audit* on young people in the South African economy is so timely.

Once again, I would like to congratulate Jan Hofmeyr and the individual authors on a document that will undoubtedly stimulate the policy environment in South Africa. The aim remains a shared one: to create a fairer society by offering more South Africans basically decent living standards and the opportunity to participate in the economy. The IJR is proud to present the 2012 *Transformation Audit*, which offers indispensable reading for domestic and international decision-makers, managers and citizens alike who share this goal.

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