

PAVEE PEOPLE AND POWER -

An integrated approach to conflict among Travellers, at family, community and structural context levels

A REVIEW OF A RANGE OF INITIATIVES UNDERTAKEN, 2001-2011,
BY PAVEE POINT MEDIATION SERVICE AND BY LOCAL GROUPS

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Contents

Overview	2
Review of literature on conflict and violence within minority communities	3
Marginalisation and conflict	3
Family, child rearing and violence	4
Strategies to address violence	5
Culture, history and change	6
Travellers: identity and marginalisation	7
Foundational factors in violence	8
Traveller mediation services: History	9
Internal conflict	10
Internal conflict: Causes and impact	11
Contextual causes	11
Internal causes	12
Impact of conflict on Traveller communities	13
Areas to be addressed	14
Structural responses	14
Ongoing needs	15
Traveller organisations and conflict initiatives	15
Ongoing needs	16
Conclusion and suggestions for the next steps	17
Concluding summary	18
References	19

ACRONYMS

FVPF	Family Violence Prevention Fund (USA)
MTCMI	Midlands Traveller Conflict Management Initiative
PPMS	Pavee Point Mediation Service
STAR	Settled/Traveller Agreement and Reconciliation

Overview

The issue of conflict in Traveller communities has come to the fore, not least because it has recently assumed new and frightening proportions, but also because media coverage of this violence often transmutes bad conflict into catastrophic conflict. It is essential to emphasise that only a small proportion of Travellers are responsible for anti-social behaviour, and the main sufferers are the Travellers. The roots of violence are deep in the historic marginalisation of Travellers in Irish society, but conflict has been augmented by the impact of modernisation, the incursion of illicit drugs, and the violence and destruction of the lives not only of dealers and users, but of their communities also. This review of conflict and mediation initiatives covers the following three areas:

- Literature on intra-ethnic conflict. The focus is on key issues regarding this violence, and experience in comparable community contexts (Indigenous Australian communities, and inner-city black communities in the USA).
- Traveller mediation services and their engagement with internal conflict among Travellers.
- Possible solutions - a way forward

Review of literature on conflict and violence within minority communities

The following literature review is sharply limited. The intention is to highlight issues that might help Traveller organisations and service agencies to address violence within the Traveller community. At the outset, it should be said that violence is a breakdown in relationships – this is clear in the analyses of violence, and the strategies to address it, that are reviewed here. Internal violence occurs in communities that are marginalised, whether on the basis of social class or ethnicity (or both).

MARGINALISATION AND CONFLICT

Anderson (1994, 1999) analyses how young black Americans in severely disadvantaged inner city areas negotiate their lives. Inner-city residents classify families into two main types – “decent” and “street”. “Decent” families seek to better themselves, parents are effective, fathers are good providers and role models for their sons. In “street” families, these values are gone, life is a desperate struggle, parenting is haphazard and effective role models are absent; children often have to fend for themselves. Young people turn to each other and develop a “code of the street”, which usually demands competitive toughness and a sharp increase in aggression – no one is allowed to “disrespect” you. Decent young people must also learn the code, and operate within it for their own safety even if they disagree with it. However, Garot (2007) found that the code does sometimes allow conflict avoidance – if this is for a recognised “good reason”, and/or is done cleverly. Young people are inventive in the ways in which they subvert the code from time to time – but ultimately it controls their lives. Garot notes that most of the young people who successfully avoid violence without losing status, have jobs (they have too much to lose if they get sucked into the life of the street). Males living in the most devastated inner-city communities were more likely to show patterns of escalating violence than were males living in inner-city neighbourhoods where there was stronger neighbourhood networking, or a greater range of income and access to resources. (Sheidow, Gorman-Smith, Tolan and Henry, 2001, p. 347).

The street code and allegiances also replace older allegiances to male role models who were respected in their homes and in the community. Unemployment and racial inequalities have undermined the older generation's status and influence (Parker and Maggard, 2009, p. 728) because street kids have gained easy (illegal) access to money. The presence of traditional role models can still reduce the rate of physical assaults by youth, but cannot compete successfully with the lure of the drug culture. Community outreach members told Parker and Maggard that older males probably would not tell youth to stop selling drugs, particularly when there are so few viable options for employment and money. Besides, if the elders challenged the dealing, these older men might lose what status they still have in the community. What they felt that they could do was "encourage the youth to 'do the right thing with the money' -- to use [it] to help ... family and others in need". (Parker and Maggard, 2009, p. 731)

Internal violence is common within marginalised ethnic groups also (Lilja and Hultman, 2011): the Palestinian movement is beset by internal conflicts; in the Algerian civil war, most civilian deaths were due to attacks by intra-ethnic rebel groups; turf wars in U.S. inner cities are well known. So, although it might make sense that an oppressed group would unite and pull together, in reality, rival sub-groups compete with each other for power, and target their own constituent populations in an effort to control home territory. At a less organised level, the despair born of oppression can fuel internal conflicts: for instance, the Irish peasants' faction-fights of the nineteenth century, outbreaks of violence among Traveller groups, or violence within Australian Aboriginal groups. Yeats' words, about civil war in Irish society, apply:

"Out of Ireland we have come; great hatred, little room. We are marred from the start."

(W. B. YEATS, 1933, APOLOGY FOR INTEMPERATE SPEECH).

The prevalence of violence in all these settings is deeply linked with injustice, and the denial of life chances and resources to which minority communities and individuals are entitled. This internal conflict also sounds very like the competition and control mechanisms used by drug-dealers, to control their territories.

In recent research and policy literature and in reports on community programmes, there is a strong impetus to move from reflecting on causes, to finding ways to deal with current crises. Noel Pearson, an Australian Aboriginal spokesman, is noted for his criticism of what he terms the progressive approach to alcoholism among Aboriginal people. In this approach, he says, alcoholism is viewed as a symptom of the deep hurt caused by colonisation and ongoing racism, and the cure is seen as lying in healing this hurt. Pearson rejects this approach as unworkable, even fatalistic. Instead, he calls for something like tough love: treat this alcoholism as an addiction. But to drive home his point he portrays the two approaches as diametrically opposed. In the real world, it is not either-or: the history and the hurt must be recognised in a process of ending self-blame and shame and reclaiming self worth and capacity for resilience. This creates the conditions for more strictly clinical approaches to addiction. History cannot simply be repressed (Memmott, Stacy, Chambers & Keys, 2001).

FAMILY, CHILD REARING AND VIOLENCE

There is a wide range of literature linking gender inequality, partner violence, and violence against children, to wider conflicts; domestic and wider communal violence foster each other. It seems self-evident that the things that are culturally valued (or at least tolerated), or the things that are learned and practised in the home will inevitably be carried into the wider community. In a study by Atkinson, Taylor and Walker (2009), women expressed their concern and feelings of helplessness, knowing their sons will grow up and beat their wives and show no respect for women.

Some research tends to identify domestic violence as the chief driver of communal conflict. However, if domestic violence were the driver, then one could expect to find that in conflict-torn communities, all families would be dysfunctional. This is not the case. The link between domestic and communal violence is complex. Parker and Maggard

(2009) found that three factors interconnect to shelter children and young people from exposure to violence: economic opportunity, functional family structures, and a neighbourhood network where people look out for each other, and for each other's children. Effective family functioning requires emotional cohesion, shared beliefs about the family and child development, intolerance of antisocial values, and effective discipline.

Effective parents in poor areas can protect their young from exposure to violence only if their neighbourhood network is strong. If violence makes inroads in a disadvantaged area, effective parents often seek to protect their children by moving out. If they cannot leave, this challenging environment impels them to be very strict with their children, and to withdraw the family into its own space. Predictably but ironically, this retreat weakens neighbourhood networking. When networking is gone, there is little difference in terms of vulnerability to violence between the children of functional and dysfunctional families. Once children step outside their homes, they are equally exposed.

Sheidow et al.(2001, pp. 356, 357) challenge the assumption that youth violence is indicative of family dysfunction, and suggest that the primary focus in addressing violence should be the community context. However, witnessing violence and experiencing mistreatment can impair children's social cognition, leaving them prone to react aggressively, and believing that violence is a normal reaction to problems. Miller (1990, cited in Memmott et al., 2001, p. 10), links dysfunctional reactions to discrimination/colonisation, and child socialisation:

... compensatory masochism ...; learned helplessness ...; the development of aggressive habits and beliefs, poor self-esteem; psychological reactive and confrontational coping mechanisms, all contribute ... to Aboriginal intracultural aggression and violence. Socialisation of Aboriginal children, in particular boys, in a colonised discriminatory environment has led to the above individual factors interacting with frustration and conflict to cause aggression and violence.

STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS VIOLENCE

Memmott et al. note that the literature on Aboriginal violence and violence programmes highlights the need for:

1. community-driven programs
2. community agencies to establish linkages and working relationships with each other and with relevant government agencies
3. composite violence programs that provide a more holistic approach to community violence (2001, p. 80)

They argue that the extended family in Aboriginal society performs many of the functions of local community structures in the majority society, so family and community violence are also more closely interrelated.

Programmes to address violence in Aboriginal communities include strategies offering:

1. Support
2. Identity strengthening
3. Behavioural reform (in prison, and in community, targeting offenders. Include anger, stress management skills etc.)
4. Community policing and monitoring (programs employ or enlist Indigenous people to police, monitor violence in the Indigenous community ... schemes rely on the successful establishment of a good working relationship with the local police).

5. Shelter/protection (family refuges; sobering-up shelters)
6. Justice (includes [i] mediation between people in conflict, [ii] the designation of culturally-appropriate punishment for acts of violence, and [iii] prevention of recidivism)
7. Mediation (vigorous debate regarding ... whether mediators should be [a] trained local Indigenous people, or [b] individuals who are clearly neutral and apolitical...; indigenous or non-indigenous).
8. Education and training (Memmott et al., 2001, pp. 64—78)

The focus of the US Family Violence Prevention Fund (FVPP) Report is on family violence, but, as this literature review has indicated, the dividing lines between family and community violence are porous. The Report itemizes the "Nuts and bolts of working in communities". Programmes to address violence should:

- Help community members see family violence as a priority.
- Help residents and local organizers address family violence issues in ways that do not stigmatize or label people as "abused" or "abusers."
- "Invite, don't indict" the men in the community.
- Remember that the real work of community mobilization happens within the cultural context of a community.
- Help residents identify new community-driven ways of holding perpetrators accountable for ending their abuse.
- Devise strategies that do not rely so heavily on the criminal justice or child welfare systems.
- Integrate activities about family violence into the regular life of the community.
- Build individual capacity to intervene with friends and families.
- Close the gap between social service providers and the communities they serve.
- Understand that people listen to those they trust. (FVPP, 2001, p. 15-16).

CULTURE, HISTORY AND CHANGE

Memmott et al. (2001, p.2) note that some elements in contemporary Indigenous violence appear to have evolved in recent decades, and have "no counterpart in classical Aboriginal societies of the early contact period". They contrast "customary violence" and "the abnormal enculturation of violence" (Memmott et al., 2001, p. 23), and they link this distortion in cultural practices to the impact of colonisation. Cultural groups vary in how they define violence, but every group has its perspective on what is unacceptable attack. However, cultural practices can become distorted over time, and the roots of excess can be found in customary practices and ambivalence about violence. In Traveller culture, fair fighting is one such practice, which has morphed from being a usually well-contained practice, into being an unregulated threat to community safety.

The literature reviewed here shows the link between social structures and community violence. In his account of working in the Chicago projects, Barack Obama (2004) describes how he and his co-workers recognised a new dark phase entering these people's lives when three things came together, most notably in the lives of the young people: the escalation of a hard drugs culture, the availability of guns, and the loss of respect for the elders in the community.

"Decent" community members engage in violence to protect themselves and their family members. They know that they must show at least once that they can play by the code of the street. However, the literature reviewed here shows that despite the huge odds, some members persist in trying to work out a better way of living for all in their community. The closing words of the FVPF Report apply to all processes aimed at building relationships and fostering skills to address conflict positively:

Community engagement to end family violence is complex work, but changing society happens in small increments, one family, one step at a time... Family violence does not occur in a vacuum ... community solutions must reflect the full scope of issues of concern to their residents.... When solutions come from within, the changes that result are long-term and truly reflect a community's resources, culture, needs and goals. (2001, p.17)

TRAVELLERS: IDENTITY AND MARGINALISATION

Historical records indicate that there were 'tynkeres' in Ireland since at least the twelfth century; a recent human genome research project, reported in the RTE "Blood of the Travellers" programme series (2011), proved that biologically, Travellers have been a separate population for at least one thousand years. They are an indigenous ethnic minority in Irish society. Liégeois (1994) describes Traveller culture as 'a delicate web' of strategies to maintain their sense of self, while they live and work immersed in the hostile settled population. Travellers' nomadic heritage or mindset gives everything a distinctive cast, whether or not the individual or social unit in question is travelling or ever intends to travel (McDonagh, 1994). Recognition of cultural identity is essential to personal and social self-worth:

The recognition of Travellers' culture and identity has an importance for Travellers and their status in Irish society. Identity and belonging is vital to everybody and is equal to physical wants and needs....

(TASK FORCE ON THE TRAVELLING COMMUNITY, DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, EQUALITY AND LAW REFORM, 1995)

However, Travellers' claim to ethnic/cultural status is often challenged or dismissed because this highly flexible culture is underestimated (Liégeois, 1994). They have been and are targets of prejudice and discrimination from the majority settled population and its institutions:

The single most discriminated against ethnic group [in Ireland] is the 'Travelling People'.

(EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY ON RACISM AND XENOPHOBIA, 1991, CITED IN THE TASK FORCE REPORT, 1995)

The impact of racist hostility, denigration and denial of rights and life chances augments the risk of conflict and violence within a minority community. Interpersonal racism is hurtful and harmful but institutional racism has the most powerful impact on the lives of minority ethnic groups. State service systems, operated often by well-intentioned professionals, can negatively affect Travellers. Brief comment here will focus on accommodation, education and employment issues; Travellers' relations with the police and justice systems will be discussed at more length in the rest of the report.

Accommodation services remain of very mixed quality. When accommodation is provided that reflects Travellers' preference for living in extended family groups, it is not always of adequate quality. Overcrowding, poor-quality built environment, enforced immobility, and isolation can intensify internal conflict and put intolerable strain on Travellers' traditional ways of dealing with normal differences that can arise in any group.

Travellers' participation in formal education is limited; the poor returns in terms of improved economic opportunities mean that those who do persevere are not seen as motivating role models. The long years in school and college look more like a treadmill than a stairway to new possibilities. However, poor educational attainment feeds into the restriction on Travellers' life chances, in a vicious cycle.

Travellers' economic life has traditionally been entrepreneurial. Their opportunities for trade and service provision were restricted by their social marginalisation, and vice versa: most Travellers have traditionally lived in extreme poverty. As modernisation eroded their historic roles in rural communities, Travellers, like the rest of the population, moved increasingly into urban areas. They found new entrepreneurial opportunities, for instance in trading and scrap collection. As opportunities for these activities have shrunk, Travellers increasingly seek employment in mainstream businesses. However, the unemployment rate for Travellers stands at 70% -- the highest for any sector of the national population. Even if their activities in the informal economy are factored in, work opportunities for Travellers are severely restricted. Those who do find jobs, mainly work in Traveller community development projects.

The family (nuclear and extended) is at the core of Traveller identity; Travellers are family members first, individuals second. The family is the economic and social unit. While education and employment in the wider economy may offer the promise of diversified life choices and opportunities, they also pose the risk of weakening the individual's place in the all-important family network. This adds a distinctive layer to the economic challenges that Travellers share with many marginalised minorities.

FOUNDATIONAL FACTORS IN VIOLENCE

The major driving factor in communal violence (and in personal self-harm) in all these minority community settings is unequal power relations generating unequal access to resources and life chances.

Lives are shaped by social structural elements of economic disadvantage, illicit drug economies, and distressed households. (PARKER AND MAGGARD, 2009, P.717)

Only by re-establishing a viable mainstream economy, particularly one that provides jobs for young inner-city men and women, can we provide a positive sense for the future ... Unless serious efforts are made ... and the cycle is broken, ... alienation and violence ... will likely worsen. (ANDERSON, 1999, P. 325)

Traveller mediation services: History

The Pavee Point Mediation Service (PPMS) was launched in 1999, initially with financial support from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust. Since 2000 it received financial support from the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. The Service was established to work with Travellers and settled people to address conflict whether between the members of the two communities or within the Traveller community. The Pavee Point Service comprised two or three workers, but its impact has been countrywide. From the start it liaised with groups seeking to develop mediation services locally.

The PPMS STAR programme (Settled/Traveller Agreement and Reconciliation) drew on the Northern Ireland Peace Process for inspiration and skills. STAR called for a peace process involving whole communities. The PPMS reports a range of successful engagements in this process. All agencies were involved, and concrete outcomes are identified.

PPMS had to assert its impartiality; it could not be seen as an agent of the service providers, or as a mouthpiece for the Travellers. As its work became known, its independence was recognised: its efforts at mediation were seen as "fair". In the years 2007-2009 PPMS held 13 workshops around the country, and dealt with 77 cases, including difficulties around postal delivery, dog control, and Traveller escorts for post delivery. PPMS has also developed a template to monitor internal conflict. A steering group has been organised, involving all the national Traveller Organisations (National Traveller Women's Forum, Irish Traveller Movement, Pavee Point, National Association of Traveller Training Centres, the Traveller Community Development Projects Network, National Traveller Money And Budgeting Advisory Service, and the Parish for Travellers).

PPMS have developed a programme called "We can sort it out". This is a six-part training module, for use on variety of Traveller training programs run by Traveller organisations and Traveller Training Centres. The program gives Travellers an opportunity to explore conflicts, to examine their own and others responses to conflict situations and to develop skills that are useful in dealing with conflict.

The PPMS file contains reports on national meetings held since 2001, and a range of planning and review documents. If every planning/review/ meeting report is considered an "event", there have been 31 events since 2001, of which eight focus solely on Traveller/settled conflicts, twelve primarily address Traveller/settled and internal conflict but include comment on internal conflict, and eleven focus specifically on internal conflict.



Internal conflict

Conflict within the Traveller community is a complex and sensitive issue, of great concern to Travellers and Traveller organisations. Navan Travellers Workshop and the Mediation Service jointly invited a number of Traveller and settled members of Traveller organisations to begin to explore this sensitive topic in 2001; a second such meeting was held in Galway the same year. In the reports on those two meetings, mutual suspicion among Traveller organisations is registered, and participants grapple honestly with this, in order to find common ways of addressing their shared concern regarding communal violence.

Within the Traveller community, people can be fearful of speaking openly about issues that may bring them into conflict with other Travellers. Travellers have tended to express their concerns privately with people they trust rather than collectively. Space needs to be made for difficult issues to be discussed collectively by Travellers so that they can get useful information and develop their thinking on these issues. This will put them in a better position to engage with agencies that have a role in tackling these issues. Within Pavee Point much effort has been put into creating spaces for discussion on difficult issues relating to accommodation, policing, dumping and illicit drugs. Although such discussion remains sensitive and tentative, there is increased confidence and solidarity around these issues among Travellers in Pavee Point, and across the Traveller organisations.

Various Traveller organisations are working to develop local responses to internal conflict. Since the two meetings in 2001, there have been a number of local projects. The most recent has been the Midlands Conflict Management Initiative (MCTMI) covering Laois, Offaly, Westmeath and Longford, and evaluated by the Pobal Traveller Interagency Programme (2011). The initiative ran for the period 2009-2011, but preparatory work by the Traveller organisations and relevant agencies had been ongoing from 2007. In its main period, this project was well funded, and it employed two full-time professional mediators, one male and one female. Travellers were equally comfortable working with either mediator (they did not seek a gender match); the gender balance in the mediation team possibly facilitated this. Traveller families, including those involved in violence, were central to the initiative. In their feedback to the MCTMI evaluation, Travellers were positive in their response to this project: the mediation had helped them heal rifts, learn skills, and reclaim their lives from the shadow of violence and fear.

A multi-agency approach was used. Involved local agencies included community organisations, local authorities, social services, health, education, Gardaí, prison and probation services, and the judiciary. These agencies found that a coordinated approach yielded positive results. Specifically, the Garda records indicate that this initiative resulted in a major drop in the level of funds and manpower required to deal with conflict among Travellers, and Garda-Traveller relations became more positive.

PPMS has contributed to the debate on Traveller-settled relations, and its influence is widespread in local initiatives. Overall, PPMS and other mediation initiatives have

- Offered models of good practice
- Promoted a culture of mediation
- Put the issue of conflict on the agenda.
- Promoted openness in services to recognising their institutional discrimination
- Worked to strengthen Travellers' positive identity and value on peace (e.g. the peace pin)
- Disseminated Information and skills (through workshops etc) Travellers and service providers
- Liaised with services and other Traveller Organisations
- Explored thinking on the issues, in seminar brainstorming and workshops, and research.

Finally, these initiatives indicate that to be effective programs must:

- Acknowledge that the process is slow, and requires a substantial investment of time and resources
- Seek to involve the whole Traveller community, particularly those at the heart of the conflict
- Provide a multi-agency, co-ordinated approach.

At national meetings, Travellers reflected on the causes of violence in their communities, and on its impact. These are reviewed below.

INTERNAL CONFLICT: CAUSES AND IMPACT

The same points were made in every meeting, and are reflective of insights informing and emerging from local initiatives also. These insights, and suggestions for strategies, parallel closely international research findings regarding internal conflict in marginal societies elsewhere. The similarity in points made regarding causes and impact of violence reflects the sheer persistence of this problem. Ideas on how to address it emerge, and in the final meeting, there was a clear intent to develop a planned, coordinated and outcomes-focused approach to devising and implementing strategies.

CONTEXTUAL CAUSES

The causes of conflict within Traveller communities are predominantly in the wider context. Societal and institutional discrimination intersect, with the following impact on Travellers:

- Marginalisation and exclusion
- Loss of economic opportunity

- Overcrowding, competition for scarce accommodation
- Failure by the justice system to protect Travellers from conflict, whether from settled society or internally
- Travellers' mistrust of the justice system
- Negative media images of Travellers and conflict involving them
- Discrimination against the community, accompanied by self-exclusion, makes access to normal channels of conflict resolution more difficult for Travellers

Tolerance for low-grade violence makes serious outbreaks more possible

Inequalities, hopelessness and denigration fuel anger, which becomes diverted internally.

INTERNAL CAUSES

It must be emphasised that current conflict problems are very serious, but they are generated and maintained by the anti-social practices of a tiny minority of Travellers. As in any social group, elements in the culture help this violence to happen, and this also needs to be addressed. Modernisation is a challenge for all communities; its impact in Traveller society and culture is differentiated by Travellers' marginalisation, their close family ties and their rapid loss of a distinctive nomadic way of life.

Traditions and modernisation pull against each other, so old ways of dealing with conflict are failing their purpose, and also taking new and problematic forms. Elements include:

- A culture of honour where backing down is seen as weakness
- A loss of respect among younger members for elder members and traditions, affecting internal family discipline
- Negative consequences of extended family relationships on current social fabric of Travellers
- Family loyalties which inhibit broader Traveller solidarity
- Sedentarisation and loss of the traditional conflict management strategy of moving on
- Diminished capacity of traditional methods such as the fair fight, to resolve conflicts and achieve binding results
- A change in the cultural practice of fighting -- it has become a business
- The role of women as instigators or fosterers of violence
- Use of internet and mobile phones to foment violence, organise physical fights, and engage in cyber-bullying
- Internal impact of anti-social Travellers
- Drug use and dealing, guns and gun crime, anti-social behaviour, intimidation and violence.
- Children who learn whom to hate/fear. In the MCTMI project, Traveller women reported that children are told stories about ongoing feuds. This does not indicate that all Traveller families do this all the time – but possibly, in a culture where children are part of all aspects of family life, it happens when conflict is a burning issue. Inevitably, this helps to legitimate violence in the child's mind, and to perpetuate feuds across the generations.

IMPACT OF CONFLICT ON TRAVELLER COMMUNITIES

Systematic intimidation by a small subset of Travellers is "tearing the heart out of the Traveller community" (December 2001 report); it

- Breeds fear, depression, increased domestic violence
- Introduces a sense of powerlessness to address communal conflict
- Inflicts trauma especially among those directly involved in violence, on both sides
- Encourages a tradition of silence--Travellers may deny or refuse to discuss internal conflict
- Fosters a fear of focusing on internal conflict – no one wants to add to the negative image of Travellers
- Impairs the ability to deal with new problems
- Redirects leadership to the gang bosses/bullies
- Communicates a tolerance of violence to children.

Areas to be addressed

As noted, the economic context is crucial to creating conditions in which lessen the impetus to conflict' adequate and appropriate social services are also central to creating a community environment which makes it possible to engage positively with conflict issues.

Adequate, respectful and culturally appropriate social services contribute to developing an environment that is conducive to community peace. The Gardaí and justice services are of paramount importance in creating conditions for peace.

Traveller organisations and community members also can work to strengthen the positive relationship-building elements in their culture, and to identify and address problematic practices.

Below is an overview of possible strategies, identified in reports and research literature reviewed here.

STRUCTURAL RESPONSES

As the MCTMI report states, "Travellers' marginalisation and internal violence feed off each other. Mistrust of the justice system. . . can make internal revenge look like a good substitute for the law". Mediation initiatives have proven that inter-agency approaches are possible and effective. In particular, the police and judiciary can support mediation by strong policing (which names and deals with criminality) combined with building respectful relations with Travellers, and supporting the mediation process.

Ongoing needs

- To end racism in public services
- To recognise and value Travellers' cultural identity
- To engage in collaboration, not simply consultation, with Traveller communities
- To develop cross-sectoral approaches, involving all service providers and the local communities in developing fair and adequate services, and in developing strategies to address violence and its impact on this provision
- To address issues of educational attainment and work/ employment opportunities
- To further build Traveller targeted health service provision to address issues of substance abuse (including prescription and other licit drugs, alcohol, and illicit drugs)
- To provide adequate accommodation: overcrowding and unfit dwelling places drive frustration and violence
- To review the idea of compatibility as a criterion for accommodation allocation
- To demand ethical media reporting on Travellers
- To promote positive interaction between police and Travellers, and ensure that police have a broader understanding of the community
- To address gaps in awareness among senior Gardaí, in local authorities and other services
- To address institutional bias in justice system, media, etc.
- To offer a justice system that is fair but tough, where criminality is named and dealt with
- To provide strong policing to contain violence; this is an essential prerequisite if space to address violence issues is to be opened up
- To ensure police response to internal Traveller crime (e.g. domestic violence)
- To coordinate policing across regions, because conflict among Travellers in one area can seep out to relatives elsewhere.
- To encourage Travellers to use the justice institutions – they're flawed but the only ones available
- To ensure Traveller access to victim support services
- To engage Travellers in supporting the rule of law in their own communities.

A final note: Many Gardaí have little contact with Travellers outside of criminality and conflict. Pre-service and in-service training are essential to ensure that Gardaí and particularly junior Gardaí, gain a greater understanding of the diversity of the community, recognise the traumatic impact of criminality on them, and understand why they are often reluctant to call on the Gardaí for protection from members of their own community.

TRAVELLER ORGANISATIONS AND CONFLICT INITIATIVES

Traveller Organisations have invested considerable time and energy in reviewing the issue of conflict within their own community; in the past ten years, this has been documented. The same issues come up again and again – but this is true of any intractable development in a group's cultural practices. External and internal factors have combined to distort old customs, and to introduce new and dangerous developments. This reflects experience elsewhere: communities seeking to address such developments have a long and slow process ahead of them. However, Traveller organisations and allied services have promoted an impressive growth in awareness, and in skills to address these issues in the communities, and this gives hope for the future.

Ongoing needs

■ Unity

- Coordinate a united approach across the Traveller Organisations.
- Establish synergy among Traveller organisations.
- Distribute power across diverse Traveller Organisations.
- Foster solidarity among Travellers throughout the country.

■ Mediation

- Embed mediation in all Traveller organisations.
- Promote Travellers as mediators in their own communities.
- Recognise the need for a wider community development and inter-agency approach to prevent conflict.
- Provide an effective context for conflict mediation when it is needed.
- Strengthen links between mediation initiatives, to develop a co-ordinated and consistent national approach.
- Address latent and low-level conflict.

■ Cultural Assessment

- Initiate a review of how some cultural practices have been reshaped (e.g. the "fair fight").
- Rethink traditional customs that no longer work.
- Build awareness of the effects of feuding.
- Focus on building relationships, not simply resolving conflicts.
- Build a shared valued identity to counteract internalised oppression and fatalism.
- Foster Travellers' capacity to secure their children's current and future safety:
 - reflect on current child-rearing practices, and
 - change cultural attitudes to violence and macho values.
- Combat misuse of mobile phones and other social networking channels.

■ Parenting

- Highlight importance of parental influence.
- Foster positive matriarchal/patriarchal roles.
- Be proactive regarding anti-social activities.

■ Civic involvement

- Promote Travellers' civic involvement in their own communities and in their local areas.
- Build confidence and capacity in communities.
- Focus on the positive – relationship building, not just conflict management.
- Support good leaders.
- Develop codes of conduct.
- Learn to live with differences.
- Confront institutional discrimination.

Conclusion and suggestions for the next steps

This review shows that the dilemmas facing the Traveller community are similar to those facing other marginalised minority groups internationally. The foundational issue remains the economy: violence breeds where there is no hope. The deep interconnection between economic activity and family systems in the Traveller culture adds a distinctive element to the challenges facing them.

Parents and young people need access to income and opportunities to improve their lives and plan for a better future. But even where this is a dim prospect (as in the current recession, which is worsening Travellers' already marginalised and restricted economic situation), communities and individuals need to address the issue of violence.

The incursion of hard drugs and guns among young people, combined with loss of respect for traditions and elders is also shared. Travellers themselves have analysed their own situation, and generated similar insights to those offered in research. The task remains to build on these insights, and to find effective strategies for action. In situations of violence, effective action can only be effective if it does not threaten the lives or status of the leaders or the community members who want to find a better way of managing their lives.

Reading the workshop reports in the light of the research literature, two core issues are highlighted regarding how to address the current serious outbreaks of violence which are seriously hurting the lives of all, even though very few are actually responsible for such outbreaks.

First is the need for community leaders and allied agencies to keep meeting, to pool their knowledge and experience.

Secondly, relations with the Gardaí and justice systems need to be strengthened; Gardaí and the judiciary need to learn more about the diversity of Traveller culture, the reality of racism and its effects, while also providing strong policing and law enforcement to Traveller communities caught in either external or internal conflict.

Literature findings also suggest that all the facets of violence are interconnected, and need to be addressed in a holistic way (Memmott et al., 2001; FVPF, 2001). In all aspects of community life – child rearing, partner relations, nuclear and extended family relations, and in the wider community – violent practices need to be identified, reviewed and changed. Families and individuals who try to buck the trend towards violence risk losing status if the cultural climate does not support this change. They even risk their safety if their community is trapped in serious violence. A cultural climate which favours positive management of difference and conflict must be developed by leaders in collaboration with families and individuals, if a reduction in violence is to be effective.

- Co-ordinate discussions among all the initiatives addressing violence at any level within the community (Violence against Women, Primary Health Care, Men's groups, Traveller Families Care), promote reflection on how these forms of violence fuel each other.
- In education and training, primary health work and youth and community work programmes, give central importance to building relationship skills and strategies for positive management of difference and conflict.
- Explore the potential of the new NTP context to facilitate national coordination in addressing conflict.

At the Seminar on Conflict management and the Travelling Community, hosted by the Equality Division of the Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform on 5th February 2010, participants recommended a one-year strategy for action, which offers the possibility of strengthening and coordinating local initiatives addressing violence.

At national level, a Travellers' pilgrimage for peace was suggested. Symbolic statements have proven to be powerful. In reports reviewed here it was noted that the peace pin helped to draw Travellers together and energise their efforts to transform conflict into positive relations that respect difference. A pilgrimage for peace would be an even more public statement. As regards symbolic actions of this kind, the Traveller community, its organisations and leaders need to reflect on a number of questions. For instance, will the act draw people together or push them further apart; will those for peace lose or gain status and influence with those who are being drawn into criminal violence.

As regards action at local level, the seminar participants recommended that Traveller organisations prioritise conflict issues for a year:

- Pool insights
- Become aware of and document the impact of communal violence – on work, health, family life, children's education etc.
 - Develop conflict policy and proof other policies to reflect it.
 - Document effective strategies Travellers have, or are developing, for dealing with conflict, and pool the findings at future local, regional and national meetings..
 - Develop national strategy and local subgroups to target this issue:
 - Designate a staff member to monitor this issue.
 - Provide conflict transformation training.
 - Use "We can sort it out".

CONCLUDING SUMMARY

Very few Travellers are responsible for instigating current outbreaks of violence, but these outbreaks are "tearing the heart out of the community". In a context of economic hopelessness, the incursion of hard drugs, guns and the erosion of traditions and the status of the elders, the danger is increased, particularly for young people.

To address the current crisis, the community needs increased access to economic opportunities, strong community networks, and effective family functioning. Racism in state services needs to be addressed. In particular, the justice services need to learn about and respect Traveller identity, and to develop policies and practices to ensure their right to protection and redress.

Historically, Travellers have proved their resilience in the face of economic and social exclusion and deprivation. Today, any progress Travellers can make in addressing internal conflict will improve the quality of their lives, and release energy that could be directed to the foundational issues that restrict their access to life chances. With the support of allied agencies and state services, local Traveller groups could take the issues named in this summary report (issues that recurred in every meeting), identify one or more which they could address, and devise a strategy to begin doing so. Together, they can make a difference.

We can sort it out.

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"The issue of conflict in Traveller communities has come to the fore, not least because it has recently assumed new and frightening proportions, but also because media coverage of this violence often transmutes bad conflict into catastrophic conflict. It is essential to emphasise that only a small proportion of Travellers are responsible for anti-social behaviour, and the main sufferers are the Travellers."



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