

violence in the country, and parts of it were to be declared "unrest areas" at the beginning of November 1992. The designation indicated that the level of violence in the affected locality was such as to warrant the introduction of troops and other special security measures; most of the unrest areas were in fact in Natal. The violence had also resulted in thousands of refugees and displaced people. Many had fled from rural areas into the towns, where they were shifting for themselves as best they could; others sought shelter in sugar cane fields.

When the Commonwealth team arrived in Natal in October 1992, only 6 of the planned 26 Local Peace Committees had been formed, and of these only 2 appeared to be functioning within any degree of effectiveness. In other words, the mechanisms to combat the violence were not yet in place in the province. There were several reasons for this state of affairs.

For the Peace Accord to work in Natal, close and effective co-operation was required between Nelson Mandela's African National Congress (ANC) and Chief Buthelezi's Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) — yet these were the two parties at war in the province. But the most conspicuous absence, which was to detract from the effectiveness of the mechanisms of the Peace Accord, was that of the traditional authorities. The Chiefs of South Africa as a body had not been a party to the Accord. In the Cape, the Transvaal and other parts of the country, this did not matter much but in Natal it made all the difference.

In that province, the traditional authorities had not only survived the many changes of South African history but had done so with a marked vigour. The Chiefs (*amakhosi*), the elders (*indunas*) and the military formations of youths (*amabutho*), all of which go back to the days of King Shaka at the beginning of the 19th century, were by no means merely ceremonial vestiges. They remained vital components of Zulu culture and, partly as a result of apartheid, exercised considerable power and authority. In the rural communities of Natal, much depended on the traditional authorities in general and the Chiefs in particular. Yet not only had they not been signatories to the National Peace Accord; as it turned out, they did not even know much about it. Where the Chiefs appeared to know something about the Accord, they regarded it with ill-concealed hostility.

Initially, the Local Peace Committees were called Local Dispute Resolution Committees (LDRC). The choice of name aroused the suspicions of the Chiefs because traditionally, a central role of the chiefly class was the settlement of disputes in the community. The Chiefs therefore perceived the Local Peace Committees as institutions taking on functions that properly belonged to them, and consequently they held back from promoting the LPCs in their respective "tribal authorities," to use the official administrative term.

There were other reasons accounting for the lukewarm attitude of some Chiefs toward the peace mechanism. For some time, relations between the Chiefs and youth