

Hoekwil and Touwsranten held the 16th community dialogue on 19 April 2023 at the Touwsranten community hall.

For the second time, we had guests from the Wilderness Heights and SAHARA. The focus of the meeting was on violence and accountability, following up from the previous dialogue. 15 people attended.

Welcoming and Framing

The meeting was held in a room lit with candles dedicated to survivors of violence in the community and rest of the country.

We revisited the discussion from the previous dialogue, where different views were shared about violence and the extent to which participants can be held accountable for their actions outside of the meeting.

Participants noted an angry and hurtful exchange on the community WhatsApp group during the week before the meeting. It was briefly discussed. It further reinforced why we needed to share our different views about violence. The dialogue decided to keep the updates brief, so that we could give more time to the main topic of the day.



How the Dialogue Works

The dialogue meets once a month on a Wednesday from 5:30 to 7pm to get feedback from subgroups, discuss issues that affect safety and prosperity and plan a way forward. Most importantly, the space is about building relationships between the people of Hoekwil and Touwsranten and sharing knowledge. The meetings are conducted in English and Afrikaans.



Updates



Feedback about the sports field fee

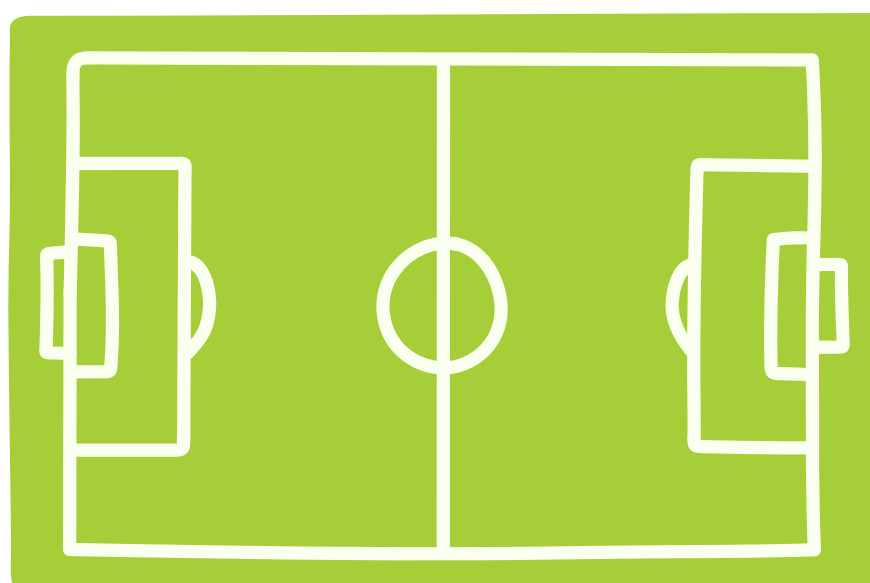
Chandre wrote to George Municipality's Sports Development to get clarity on the R2 500 fee that people have to pay to use the sports field.

The manager, Granville Camper acknowledged receiving the email.

In the response letter, the dialogue was informed that the Sports Development was looking into the affordability of the tariffs for Touwsranten and other rural areas and would welcome ideas from the public on the matter. This was shared on the WhatsApp group.

The Department was invited to attend the next dialogue meeting to answer questions.

Walter Damons (Oom Boelie) reported that decisions such as tariffs on sports fields were decided upon by councillors and sports boards. Sports clubs were encouraged to affiliate to formal sports bodies in order to get access to the sports field. Fixtures that are approved by sports bodies are free and practice sessions for anyone are free.



Ros led the session. She made it clear that people can share their thoughts without being judged and didn't have to explain their view. The first question was:

Unpacking Violence

“What is the first thing that comes to mind when you think of the word ‘violence’?”

The responses were written on flip charts in English and Afrikaans by Chandre and Sharon.



What is Violence?

Ros asked: "What do you find striking about the written comments?"

There were different views on what is violence. Some people said they realised that, looking at the list, they could see that they had unknowingly been responsible for violence.

Everyone realised that if we want to hold each other accountable, we need to unpack and understand our differences.

One person pointed out that we often associate violence with criminal acts but the list gives us a lot to think about, because it shows that there are lots of little acts of violence every day.

Participants were also struck by how small acts of violence can easily turn into big ones.

"What did you notice happening within yourself while naming the acts of violence?"

Participants said that they realized: "how we are all part of the violence in one way or another."

Some acknowledged having either experienced first-hand, witnessed or perpetrated violence.

It was recognised that sometimes violence was out of our control. Yet, we can still hold each other accountable, for example, if you see someone being catcalled, you can speak out.

"We can all hold ourselves accountable for what we do, and what we say on the group WhatsApp."

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.....”

“ ”

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.....”

RESOLVING CONFLICT THROUGH STORYTELLING



Ros introduced the Karate Story, adapted from a story by Terry Dobson, Founder of Bond Street Dojo. The story was read in both English and Afrikaans and participants were put in groups to discuss it.

The story takes place on a train in Pretoria and revolves around three main characters: a drunk man, a karate student, and an old man.

The drunk man enters the train, disturbing the peace and behaving violently towards other passengers.

While the other passengers stand back, the karate student sees an opportunity to finally use his skills on the man, but the old man stops him. He invites the drunk man to sit with him and talks to him kindly about his life.

The drunk man listens and breaks down in tears, saying he has no wife, no house, and no job. This moment touches the karate student, and he no longer feels like a hero. Instead, he feels worse than the drunk man because he had no compassion for the man. When they leave the train, the karate student thinks about how the old man's few kind words achieved much more than a fight would have achieved.

He learns that real karate is about love.



Participants were asked: "What made it possible to resolve conflict without violence in this story?"

The responses were:

Keeping calm

Handling the situation with wisdom

The karate student focused on what he can do while the old man showed compassion

Establishing the cause of the violent behaviour

Communication, need to socialise and try to understand each other

Not being too quick to judge the drunk man's actions

Not solving violence with violence

Showing love



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"We should get into the next person's shoes, before we judge, before we think otherwise of them because we don't know what the person has on their shoulders."

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Hoekwil & Touwsranten

Community Dialogue



Participants said they were struck by how, sometimes, people stayed silent when witnessing violence because they thought it was someone else's problem; how the situation could have escalated if it had been handled violently; and how small acts of violence can have big impacts.

They also shared examples of moments where they resolved conflict without using violence.

One participant shared how he used empathy to befriend two men everyone warned him to stay away from because they were dangerous. He listened to their problems and treated them with respect.

Check Out



Participants reflected on one skill they have learnt that they would put into practice to solve conflict without using violence. Most said they would practice patience in order to remain calm and show empathy towards other people. Others said they would practice active listening and identify the causes of violence in order to address them.

**The next Dialogue to be held on the 24th of May 2023
at the Community Hall in Touwsrante**



Attendees List

Andisiwe Makwecana

Roslynn Damons

Morné Heunis

Helet Theron

Denzel De Swardt

Chandré Gould

Sharon Appels

Austin Mkadayenda

Angie Baardman

Walter Damons

Jinnifer Isaacs

Jeemon Adams

Muzilene November

Collin Wildeman

Herman Reuter

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