From the editor • Van die redakteur

The Peace Initiative

I've travelled quite a bit recently. Fourteen hospitals, ten countries and "almost countries" later, the news of the New York Peace Initiative reached me.

Two things struck me on moving around. The inequities in our subcontinent and the high levels of violence our society lives with. The inequities are easier to see even from a car window. The violence is often invisible unless you have to man a casualty department. The perception of many is that violence is on the increase. There is desperation in those who have to cope beyond their energies and competency. Motor vehicle accidents in rural areas are placing an increasing burden on scarce resources. Population growth in many areas is way beyond the natural increase due to voluntary and forced migration.

The increasing levels of violence may only be an increased workload and not necessarily an increase in the rate of assaults and accidents. There are also the war casualties on our borders and within the country.

The unequal and often inappropriately dis-tributed health service is part of inequality at all levels of society. Whatever the historical and social reasons for this is I have wondered what we can do about it. So often we rather spend our energy explaining why it is like that. How much of our violence is related to inequality?

Burglar alarms and high walls are most densely populated where the haves and the have nots are in close proximity. We applaud every peace initiative, but wouldn't greater attention to our inequalities at home make our beautiful country less traumatic?

Money to eradicate inequality. Money to create contact and dialogue within the country is surely money to make peace. I have often wondered whether, say 30% of the defence budget spent in this way would not be a more cost effective way to fight for peace.

The MRC has started a research section to study the issues around trauma and violence. We wish them well and hope they will look at the issues in their complex and global context as well as at the more specific issues.

Sam Fehrsen