

International Seminar on Restorative Justice
Peshawar, Pakistan
December 16-19, 2003

Gandhara University and the Federal Investigation Agency of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan collaborated to organize and hold the first International Seminar on Restorative Justice in Pakistan. The sessions were held in Peshawar, Pakistan December 16-19, 2003. Funding for the seminar was provided by Asian Development Bank and Catholic Relief Services.

International guests offering input to the seminar were John Braithwaite of Australian National University, Canberra, and Duane Ruth-Heffelbower of Fresno Pacific University, Fresno, California. In addition, sixteen Pakistanis from a variety of backgrounds offered presentations on the implications of restorative justice for their work.

The opening session was addressed by Lt.Gen. (R) Syed Iftikhar Hussain Shah, Governor of the North West Frontier Province, and the closing session was addressed by First Minister of the North West Frontier Province, Muhammad Akram Khan Durrani.

Forty-eight official participants heard the presentations and discussed the implications for Pakistan of moving toward a restorative justice system. The general consensus was that the jirga and panchayat traditional dispute resolution systems had much in common with restorative justice principles, and that it would be possible to implement restorative justice principles through training of those who participate in these traditional practices. The difficulty of applying restorative justice principles to the Hudood laws which are given directly in the Qur'an was discussed at some length without coming to a resolution.

The subject of using restorative justice principles for societal reconciliation was raised by Duane Ruth-Heffelbower who presented his paper "Restorative Justice for nation building: reconciliation of people groups."

At the end of the seminar the participants worked in groups to develop recommendations for the implementation of restorative justice principles. These recommendations were presented at the closing session, and are now being turned into formal proposals to the appropriate agencies. The general sense of the participants was that the seminar had been very useful, and that organized follow-up was important.