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**<insert photo women>**

## 7. Women: Using the Gender Lens

By Lisa Schirch and Manjrika Sewak*

***Armed conflicts are never gender-neutral. Whether it is economic deprivation, displacement, poverty or gender-based violence, the costs of conflict are borne disproportionately by women and their children. However, women's identity as victims often obscures the important roles they play in peacebuilding processes. This chapter highlights the contributions of women to peacebuilding and describes why using a gender lens is essential for sustainable peace and security.***

It would be incorrect to assert that all women are "natural peacebuilders." Experiences from regions of protracted conflict such as Sri Lanka, the Middle East and Kashmir reveal that women have also been active agents in perpetuating violent conflict.

However, the contributions of women's groups to peacebuilding have been highly significant. In the case studies that follow this chapter, readers will learn how the Women in Peacebuilding Network in West Africa brought international attention to the lack of women and other civil society actors in the Liberian national peace talks; how the women of Bougainville initiated a peace settlement between secessionists and the Papua New Guinean government; how women in

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Argentina protested the disappearance of their grandchildren during the civil war under a severely repressive government; and how Muslim, Hindu and Sikh women crossing "enemy-lines" in Kashmir, India, continue to initiate joint projects on development, trauma healing and reconciliation.

In times of violent conflict, men and women face new roles and changing gender expectations. Violent conflict offers opportunities for reshaping both public and private relationships between men and women and making positive steps toward gender equality. This chapter examines women's roles in peacebuilding, recent developments aimed to support these roles, current debates and challenges facing women's roles in peacebuilding, and some lessons learned and recommendations for the future.

## Women's Contribution

Peacebuilding seeks to prevent, reduce, transform, and help people recover from violence in all forms, even structural violence that has not yet led to massive civil unrest. There are four categories of peacebuilding including efforts to *wage conflict nonviolently* through activism and advocacy, *reduce direct violence* through peacekeeping, relief aid, and legal systems; *transform relationships* through dialogue, mediation, negotiation, and trauma healing; and *build capacity* through training and education, development, military conversion and research. Women play important roles in each of the four categories of peacebuilding.

### Wage Conflict Nonviolently

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As activists and advocates for peace, women ”wage conflict nonviolently” by pursuing democracy and human rights through strategies that raise awareness of conflict issues and pressure others to bring about change. In the case study from Argentina that follows this chapter, for example, women mobilized themselves as mothers and grandmothers and sustained a weekly public protest at a time when other activists had gone into hiding due to severe governmental repression. In so doing, they emerged as one of the most profound examples of women waging conflict through advocacy and nonviolent action, to achieve truth and justice. In the case study from Liberia, the Women’s Mass Action for Peace demonstrates that the sustained presence of women demonstrating outside the Liberian peace talks helped create the needed pressure to keep rebel and government leaders at the negotiating table until they reached agreement. In Bougainville, the Leitana Nehan Women’s Development Agency raises awareness of the connections between private and social violence. They brought the issue of rape as a toolof war, domestic violence, and substance abuse to national attention through the use of large-scale protests.

**Reduce Direct Violence**

As peacekeepers and relief aid workers, women contribute to “reducing direct violence.” In countries around the world, women’s groups provide relief and charity work to people in need in their communities, often through their churches, mosques, or temples. They run soup-kitchens to provide food to the hungry, they offer clothing to those in need, and they set up orphanages and shelters for those with no place to go. Women’s groups in Bougainville built secret networks for humanitarian assistance when no other groups were able to provide relief to victims of the civil

violence. In the war-torn region of Jammu and Kashmir in India, the Athwaas women's initiative works to identify and meet the needs of women whose husbands have been killed or disappeared in the fighting.

**Transform Relationships**

As mediators, trauma healing counselors, and policymakers, women also work to "transform relationships" and address the roots of violence. In times of intense conflict, women's dialogue initiatives are often the only channel of communication between hostile communities/nations. In the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Jerusalem Link and Women in Black serve as two important examples of women building bridges across the lines of conflict. In the context of the conflict between Pakistan and India, groups such as WISCOMP (Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace) and WIPSA (Women's Initiative for Peace in South Asia) facilitate sustained dialogue between women's groups in the two countries, even when official diplomatic communication has been caught in war rhetoric and political jingoism and civil society engagement has been irregular and limited. By providing opportunities for face-to-face interaction and dialogue in settings of hostility, they have facilitated a much-needed humanization of perceived "others". These women's groups have fostered a "multi-track" approach to peacebuilding with a broad cross-section of civil society including NGOs, media, the business community, educators and community leaders in the two countries. Such multi-track peacebuilding plays a vital role in sustaining negotiated, political agreements brokered at the highest levels of government.

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**Build Capacity**

As educators and participants in the development process, women also "build the capacity" of their communities and nations to prevent violent conflict. Mothers can nurture the values of peace, respect, and empathy for others with their children. The West African Network for Women in Peacebuilding (WIPNET) trains women in the skills of peacebuilding to increase their capacity for on-going peace work in their organizations, communities, and nations. Through grassroots initiatives in peace education and socioeconomic empowerment, Athwaas has emerged as one of the few groups in Kashmir that has transcended the "fault-lines" of faith, ethnicity, class, gender, and political persuasion to facilitate an inclusive, gender-sensitive and sustained dialogue among diverse stakeholders in the conflict.

**The Need to Involve Women**

Despite growing awareness of the roles women play in conflict prevention and peacebuilding, resistance to the intentional inclusion of women is still widespread. Many activists on behalf of women's inclusion spend a great deal of their time simply explaining to others why it is important for women to be involved in these processes.

There are multiple ways of asserting the importance of women's involvement in peacebuilding. First, women make up half of every community. Their skills and resources are necessary for the complex tasks of peacebuilding.

Second, as central caretakers of their families, everyone suffers when women are oppressed, victimized, and excluded from conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Their centrality to communal life makes their inclusion in these activities essential.

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Third, women have the capacity for both violence and peace and in many areas of the world are, in fact, actively supporting violent solutions to conflicts. Women must be encouraged to use their special qualities in building peace rather than violence. Women can bring unique insights and values to the process of peacebuilding. Socialization processes in many cultures teach women to foster relationships and avoid violence. In addition, the historical experience of marginalization and unequal relations allows many women to empathize with those oppressed in violent contexts. Fourth, since women and men have different experiences of violence and peace, women must be allowed and encouraged to bring their unique insights and qualities to the process of peacebuilding. Fifth, women's empowerment should be seen as inherent to the process of building peace because sexism, racism, classism, ethnic and religious discrimination originate from the same set of beliefs that some people are inherently "better" than others. Like other social structures that set up some people as superior to others, the sexist belief that women's lives are less valuable than men's lives leads to violence against women. When women engage in peacebuilding, they often challenge these sexist beliefs along with other structures that discriminate against people. Finally, women have proven themselves to be successful peacebuilders. Basing their strategies on the principles of inclusivity and collaboration, and on the methodology of multi-track peacebuilding, the case studies in this section of the book show how women's groups conceptualize strategies and produce peacebuilding outcomes that are broad-based and sustainable.

**Recent Developments**

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During the 1990s, a broad coalition of women began to discuss how to engage the United Nations Security Council on the impact of armed conflict on women and women's contributions to peace. This diverse coalition of women from war zones, representatives of women's national and international NGOs, eventually formed a working group on women, peace, and security. This civil-society campaign led to the October 2000 signing of UN Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security.

Security Council Resolution 1325, hereafter referred to simply as "1325," like other SC resolutions, is binding international law that for the first time recognizes that women and their children are the vast majority of those negatively affected by conflict and endorses the participation of women as significant contributors to peace and security. 1325 includes calls for women's participation in conflict prevention and resolution initiatives; mainstreaming gender perspectives in peacebuilding and peacekeeping missions; and protection of women in regions of armed conflict. 1325 sends an important gender-sensitizing message to the UN system. It also speaks to civil society actors engaged in preventing armed conflict. While many international NGOs are including women's concerns and women actors in their peacebuilding programs, many are not. There still remains a conceptual separation between traditional "women's" concerns and the issues embraced by civil society actors involved in conflict prevention or peacebuilding activities. The UK-based organization International Alert launched a Women Building Peace global campaign with the support of 100 civil society organizations around the world to lobby for a SC resolution and later to urge the implementation of 1325 recommendations both within the UN and across civil society actors. The campaign aims to

address women's exclusion from decision-making processes that address peace, security, and development.

**Current Debate**

Women are challenging the UN, regional, governmental, and other civil society actors in a variety of ways. Many groups focus on preventing or recovering from civil and international wars. This emphasis on overt direct violence between large groups of people is important. Yet it often fails to fully challenge the structural origins of public violence and the private violence (often against women and children) that accompanies public violence. One key debate centers on women civil society actors' insistence on examining the web of violence that accompanies public violence, pointing to the growing incidence of domestic violence in regions of armed conflict. The examples of Bougainville, South Africa and the former Yugoslavia, where instances of domestic violence rose sharply during and after the armed conflict, lie at the heart of the current debate on developing holistic responses to the challenges that the complex relationship between militarization, misogyny and domestic violence presents. Rita Manchanda, a women's peace activist from India notes that

*"women are more likely to see a continuum of violence because they experience the connected forms of domestic and political violence that stretches from the home, to the street and to the battlefield".1*

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Second, women are challenging how governments and other civil society actors are defining peace and security. Women's groups assert that the values of "empathy" and "building community" can contribute significantly to a discourse on peace and security that is based on coexistence and cooperation. They advocate for a broadening of the definition of security from one confined to territorial and military security to one that considers issues of individual dignity, water security, food security, humane governance and environmental security as central to the shaping of what is considered "essential" to the field of international security – concerns that were earlier considered "soft issues". Further, making a distinction between negative and positive peace, they associate the former with the absence of widespread overt, violent conflict where other forms of violence – cultural and structural – continue long after the guns have gone silent. In this context, the notion of positive peace might be introduced as one that includes processes, which facilitate social justice, gender equity, active coexistence, economic equality and ecological security.

For instance, several women's groups working in the context of the peace process between Pakistan and India, assert the need to move beyond a peace that involves a mere absence of military conflict and arms races. They advocate for a paradigm that privileges inclusive and mutually beneficial processes for transforming the conflict. A genuine peace requires not only the absence of war but also the elimination of unjust social and economic relations, including unequal gender relations. Women's groups have introduced these new ideas of peace and security into the political diplomacy in the region.

Finally, women challenge other civil society actors to walk boldly toward greater gender equality. An issue around which there has been considerable debate is the widely held belief that

once there is a "critical mass" of women in positions of decision-making, the discourse on peace and security will undergo significant change. Many insist that it is important that a discussion on women and peacebuilding not be limited to a preoccupation with numbers or what has been termed as "add women and stir." In other words, while the goal of getting a critical mass of women into decision-making positions in peacebuilding organizations is vital, this can only be a starting point. Adding women to existing programs or structures is unlikely to bring about lasting change. The challenge lies in building a discourse on peace and security, which includes the perspectives of both women and men and which holds as central the values of coexistence, nonviolence and inclusivity. Real structural, economic, political and social change in the ways all people relate to each other must be the ultimate goal.

**Main Challenges**

The term "mainstreaming gender" captures the idea that women want more than simply joining in existing peacebuilding approaches. Mainstreaming gender means challenging the way governments, intergovernmental and regional peace and security organizations, and other civil society actors go about their work so that everyone at every level in every peacebuilding project uses a gender lens in planning, implementing, and evaluating their work.

Gender mainstreaming, represented in the diagram below, requires ongoing gender analysis, the goal of gender equality, and including women who represent the concerns of other women in all peacebuilding planning, implementation and evaluation.2

**< Insert Diagram 7.1: Three Key Steps to Mainstream Gender in Peacebuilding>**

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The first challenge is to include gender analysis in all planning, implementation, and evaluation of conflict prevention and peacebuilding programs. Conflict and violence analysis tools are important guides to all peacebuilding planning, yet they often leave out the significant differences between male and female experiences and roles. Gender analysis requires data about how war and violence affects men and women differently; the gender roles of men and women in local cultures including the division of labor and resources; the needs of women from different economic classes, religions, ethnic groups, and ages; and how women are included in all peacebuilding processes from relief aid distribution, peacekeeping programs, grassroots dialogue, to formal peace talks. Infusing a gender analysis into peacebuilding requires concrete action. Some experts call for a truth commission on violence against women.3 Specifically, such a commission could analyze the causes of, and connections between violence against women in times of war, domestic violence and trafficking of women.

The second challenge is to embrace the goal of gender equality as a central value for all peacebuilding actors. Gender equality refers to the goal of equal opportunities, resources, and respect for men and women. It does not mean that men and women become the same, but that their lives and work hold equal value. Peacebuilding programs contribute to gender equality when this goal becomes integral to every aspect of peacebuilding and not relegated to one or two programs for women. Since women and men do not have equal access to opportunities, resources, and respect in most communities, peacebuilding programs need to take affirmative action to ensure equal treatment and equal opportunity.

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The third aspect of gender mainstreaming is including women and women's organizations in every stage and activity of peacebuilding alongside men and male-led organizations. Women leaders and organizations need to have access to and active relationships with all peacebuilding actors so that they can communicate their analysis and ideas and can coordinate their energies with other peacebuilding activities. Women-only spaces are important forums to build bridges between women from different identity groups, collect information about the types and effectiveness of current programs to address violence against women, and set priorities and strategies for addressing violence against women. Funders can urge recipient organizations to include women at every level of their staff and board and ensure that these women have the support of other women and women's organizations and are not just token representatives.

**Lessons Learned and Best Practices**

Research has already proven that women make a difference when they join in the tasks of peacebuilding. Women's experiences in conflict prevention and peacebuilding offer the following lessons learned and best practices.

. Women and men experience conflict and violence differently. A redefinition of peace and security that incorporates both male and female concerns is essential to designing peacebuilding programs that bring a just peace to both women and men.

. Women play important roles in peacebuilding and are essential to creating long-term, sustainable peace. Their emphasis on building civil society alliances and engaging in multi-track processes across the lines of conflict enables them to develop holistic understandings of peace

and security. Women's peace groups, such as the Athwaas initiative of Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh women in Kashmir, have transcended the boundaries of religion, ethnicity, class, political persuasion and socioeconomic background to facilitate cross-community and multi-track interaction in their work for peace, at times representing the only group of civil society doing so. Women's peace initiatives have a track record of producing turnarounds in conflict negotiations by conceptualizing agreements that are more inclusive, community-based, and more likely to be successful in the long-run.

. Women's networks allow women to coordinate their action and multiply their power to bring about change. The case studies that follow detail the importance of strengthening and supporting partnerships among women working in specific regions and across all areas of peacebuilding practice. Women's networks, such as the Argentinean grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo, the Liberian Women's Mass Action for Peace and the Save Somali Women group, have proved that women's cooperative efforts can make a tremendous impact on preventing violence. The collaborative approach gives evidence of women's ability to work non-hierarchically with each other.

. Addressing trauma is central to peacebuilding. Many women's groups have taken the lead in addressing one of the most significant yet rarely acknowledged consequences of violent conflict – namely deep-rooted trauma. In addition to providing psychosocial services, many of these groups are engaged in training and research in order to foreground the role that trauma plays in sustaining social conflict.

. Times of social transition and conflict bring challenges to the traditional gender roles of men and women and new opportunities. The case study of women's peacebuilding in Bougainville

gives an example of women taking on new leadership roles and emerging in the public sphere as powerful actors during times of violent conflict.

. Gender training programs for entire organizations empower everyone to be involved in gender mainstreaming. The presence of trained gender advisors for all peacebuilding organizations and staff, in addition to training in and opportunities for gender analysis by other staff, can help institutionalize a shared responsibility for ongoing gender analysis of all programs. There is evidence that gender awareness training leads to changes in programming. Gender training programs among police in Cambodia, for example, resulted in new police initiatives to address domestic violence and sex trafficking.

**Recommendations**

The following four recommendations can strengthen women's ability to contribute to peacebuilding.

**Support Women's Networks**

Women's networks facilitate a cross-fertilization of ideas, best practices and lessons learned from different regions of conflict. They also enhance knowledge about different approaches to conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Perhaps most significantly, networks provide a context for the generation of financial and human resources that women's groups need to prevent and transform violent conflict. The UN, regional, governmental and civil society organizations should support women's networks so that women can coordinate and consolidate their power and their ability to act with a united voice. Although women's groups in Bougainville, Liberia and

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Kashmir have identified trauma healing and reconciliation as important needs, those with political and economic power have failed to respond adequately to their demand for training and funds for psychosocial counseling centers.

## Mainstream Gender

Women's contributions to peacebuilding and their unique experiences of violence signal the need for mainstreaming gender in all conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts. Gender mainstreaming requires moving beyond an approach that simply includes women in existing peacebuilding programs or creates special women's projects set apart from other programming. The UN, regional, governmental and civil society organizations can ensure that all their employees are trained in gender awareness, understand the relevance of gender equality to peacebuilding, and value the inclusion of women in planning, implementing, and evaluating peacebuilding programs.

## Empower Women

Many women are already empowered and are playing important roles as decision-makers at the UN, regional, national, and local structures. Yet many women are not yet able to contribute because they are refused the opportunity to participate and/or do not see themselves as able to participate in peacebuilding. Women's empowerment comes through training, networking, and opportunities where women can participate fully in planning, implementing, and evaluating peacebuilding programs. The UN, regional, governmental and civil society organizations can

continue and expand training programs specifically for women to increase their sense of empowerment in and knowledge of peacebuilding processes.

**Promote 1325**

Resolution 1325 asserts the integration of women and women's groups into conflict prevention and peacebuilding programs. The tools provided in 1325 advocate for the collection of gender-disaggregated data and testimonies to provide greater accuracy and understanding of women's needs in conflict zones. The UN, regional, governmental and civil society organizations can monitor and promote the national and international implementation of Resolution 1325.4 An important measure in this respect could be the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). States could bring in new legislatio n and policy to ensure the effective implementation of CEDAW. The low representation of women in decision-making positions and the absence of their perspectives in policy and legislation remains one of the key failures of efforts to implement 1325. Even though women played a significant role in laying the groundwork for the peace settlement in Bougainville, they are under-represented in the political structures established after the agreement. Of the 106 members appointed to the Bougainville Peoples' Congress, only six are women.

Taking the above recommendations seriously, will further strengthen women's ability to contribute to peacebuilding in the nearby future.

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**Notes**

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2 "Frameworks for Understanding Women as Victims and Peacebuilders." By Lisa Schirch. *Women and Post-Conflict.* Tokyo: United Nations University (forthcoming).

3 *Women, War, and Peace: Executive Summary.* The Independent Experts Assessment on the Effect of Armed Conflict on Women and the Role of Women in Peacebuilding. Progress of the World's Women, Volume Two, UNIFEM. 2002. p. 6.

4 "Women and Peace in the United Nations" by Sara Poehlman-Doumbouya and Felicity Hill,

*New Routes: A Journal of Peace Research and Action*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (2001)

**Resources**

**Lead organizations**

African Women Solidarity (Femmes Africa Solidarité) – Switzerland & Senegal

info@fasngo.org

http://www.fasngo.org

International Alert – United Kingdom

Women Building Peace Campaign

general@international-alert.org

http://www.international-alert.org/women/default.html

International Fellowship of Reconciliation – The Netherlands

Women Peacemaker Program

WPP@ifor.org

http://www.ifor.org/WPP/

UNIFEM – USA

For contact, please visit website

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http://www.unifem.org

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom – USA

Peace Women Project

info@peacewomen.org

http://www.peacewomen.org

Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace – India

wiscomp@vsnl.com

http://www.furhhdl.org/wiscompindex.htm

Women Waging Peace Global Network – USA

info@womenwagingpeace.net

http://www.womenwagingpeace.net

**Additional websites**

http://www.womenwarpeace.org

The UN's portal on women, peace and security

http://www.un.org/womenwatch/index.html

The UN's portal on the advancement and empowerment of women

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## 7.1 Women Breaking the Silence: The Athwaas Initiative in Kashmir

***In Jammu and Kashmir, a women's peace organization has been engaged in a bold experiment to break through the barriers of pain, mistrust, and fear that prevail in a region that has been plagued by a tragic conflict for many years. It comprises a group of Muslim, Hindu and Sikh women who work to expand constituencies of peace through a range of activities that include active listening, counseling, articulation of the concerns of women to policy makers and government interlocutors, and initiation of programs that facilitate democratic participation and just peace.*** By Sumona DasGupta and Meenakshi Gopinath*

The group, Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace (WISCOMP), is itself a project of the Foundation for Universal Responsibility of His Holiness The Dalai Lama, and their initiative is called *Athwaas*, a Kashmiri word implying a warm handshake. The members of the Athwaas group accept that they have different political convictions – yet as women they continue to "search for common ground". In an atmosphere marked by mistrust and suspicion Athwaas strives to create safe spaces for self-expression and reconciliation through sustained dialogue.

Once fabled for its beauty and tranquility, life in the Indian administered valley of Kashmir was completely shattered by the outbreak of the armed conflict in 1989. Since then thousands of lives have been lost in this "paradise on earth". Caught between the bullets of the militants and the Indian security forces, innocent people have been the victims of a mindless saga of violence. The vocabulary that now permeates the valley includes terms such as "crackdowns", "cordon and search operations", "area sanitation", "road opening patrols", and "soft targets", and in normal

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life citizens are confronted with the daily horrors of ambushes, grenade attacks, bomb blasts and landmines.

Satellite television has over the years captured the language and the images of violence emanating from the valley — lingering images of armed militants and security forces, bombs and bullets. The voices of the women of Kashmir have been conspicuously absent.

**Transforming the Nature of the Conflict**

Deeply cognizant of the fact that the women of Kashmir must find a context in which their voices could be heard, WISCOMP organized a roundtable in December 2000, entitled "Breaking the Silence: Women and Kashmir". This was the first substantive step taken by WISCOMP to explore the idea of an inclusive effort to transform the nature of the conflict in the Kashmir Valley. The roundtable provided a platform for Kashmiri women — and men as well — belonging to different faiths, age groups, social backgrounds, professions and ideologies to express their viewpoints. It was apparent that the violent conflict in Kashmir had brought in its wake not only the loss of loved ones, disintegration of social structures and support systems, but also an increasing emotional distance between communities that had earlier coexisted.1

The events that followed the roundtable were unanticipated. A group of women from Kashmir expressed their desire to carry forward the process of dialogue and to explore possibilities of working across the political and ethnic divide to understand each other's realities, acknowledge each other's pain, and work together to build constituencies of peace. The group, consisting of Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs, expressed an interest in identifying and strengthening values of coexistence and trust that had historically been a part of the Kashmiri society. Following a

brainstorming meeting in Srinagar they decided to visit each other's realities, record women's voices, and build bridges of trust. WISCOMP was asked to facilitate this process.2

In November 2001, in the course of the first field trip, Athwaas traveled to remote villages in North and South Kashmir to meet women (of whom the overwhelming majority were from the Muslim community) who had learned how to negotiate violence in everyday life even as they had lost their men folk to the bullets of either the militants or the Indian Security Forces. Then in March 2002, Athwaas visited the migrant camps in Jammu, home to the displaced Hindu community of the valley, where the residents lived in the exiled seclusion of one-room tenements.

The women of Kashmir — Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs — shared with Athwaas their testimonies of horror, custodial deaths, torture, flight, escape, exile, and exploitation. The fractured reality and complex layers of the conflict began to emerge in their starkest forms. Each member of the Athwaas delegation maintained a diary and recorded her observations. One excerpt is revealing of the intensity of the experience: "Women feel oppressed from both the militants and the security forces who have guns. Fear lurks everywhere." Another diary entry captured the sense of fear felt by women in a remote village in North Kashmir:

*"It is almost as if the women keep looking over their shoulders to ask: Who is he? Where is he? Who is with him? Whose side is he on? Can I trust the person I am talking to? My father is dead. Who killed him? Who is on my side?"3*

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The Athwaas group also visited Dardpora, the "village of widows", nestled in the foothills of the mountains that separate India and Pakistan, about 125 kilometers from Srinagar. Approaching Dardpora, the Athwaas members had to travel under security cover and were stopped by the Indian security forces at several points. The village is home to about 100-150 widows and "half widows". Their husbands have been killed either in fratricidal wars by the different militant groups or in encounters with the Indian security forces, or have simply "disappeared" in the course of the conflict. Eight years after the deaths or disappearances of their husbands, these women had re-entered the public space. They would go to the relief office, negotiate for assistance, interact with local authorities, collect wood in the jungle, grow maize and work as laborers. Though they were no longer grieving wives and mothers, the aftermath of grieving period was perhaps more painful for them than the period of grief itself. They feared for their future, and the society would not permit them any identity other than that of "widow".

The Athwaas members were taken aback by the anger and bitterness of these women, and their deep suspicions about the intentions of Athwaas. It took a Sikh member of Athwaas who knew the local dialect to convince the women that Athwaas was not out to exploit them but had a different mission — to share their grief, listen to their hopes, and possibly communicate their problems to concerned authorities.

Once the walls of mistrust and skepticism were breached, the women shared their life experiences with the group. In Dardpora and in other villages to which the group traveled, they met with several women who had lost their husbands as a result of deception, or in police custody. They shared stories of their struggles to bring up their children alone. They also told of being forced to marry militants, who then abandoned them. They now lived in terror of both the

security forces and militants. One poignant narrative was that of a woman in Chandoosa village, in a desolate part of the Baramulla district. In 2001, "unidentified gunmen" killed her husband, a militant who had surrendered to the authorities. She was living in an isolated house on a hillock surrounded by Indian security personnel. Sharing her anguish about being "caged inside her own home" this young widow was struggling to educate her two children.4

In March 2003 the Athwaas team visited two camps in Jammu where they listened to the narratives of displaced women who had lost their homes. They heard of the agony of exile, the longing to return to their homes in the valley, the anguish of living in shrunken spaces in unfamiliar terrain, and of trying to hold on to a distinct identity in the midst of a different cultural ethos.

In the course of these visits, Athwaas members listened to the stories and recorded their personal reactions. Where possible they showed the women how to get in touch with the authorities, who to contact, and how to register a self-help group. The idea was to enable the women to make the mental shift from thinking of themselves as victims to that of survivors.

**Not One Truth**

The physical and emotional journey of Athwaas along a road less traveled was difficult, even traumatic. The group itself was reflective of the diversity of the valley, with members from different communities whose experiences of conflict, ideological convictions and perceptions on the causes of the conflict also differed. The realities they encountered and the first-hand testimonies they heard shook some of these beliefs and perceptions to the core. The roundtable in December 2000 had provided an early indication that there was no "one truth" that superceded

other truths in Kashmir. Yet it was not until this composite group traveled across the valley and the camps of Jammu that they could appreciate the extent of this fractured reality. Pain, loss and suffering interspersed with profiles of courage and determination in the face of adversity were the common thread that united women across diverse communities. The Athwaas members were able to understand first-hand how women negotiate the space between victimhood and agency and how in many cases the boundaries between the two categories get blurred.

The Athwaas members needed time to come to terms with what they were seeing and experiencing and to strategize on the nature of the interventions they wanted to initiate. The WISCOMP team in New Delhi worked closely with Athwaas at every stage along the way, organizing workshops to reflect on their experiences, reviewing the lessons learned from the trips, and strategizing on how to move ahead. WISCOMP facilitated training modules to create a repertoire of tools that could be used in the field, including observation, active listening, interviewing, and basic counseling skills for dealing with individuals under stress. In the field, they used role-playing activities to assess people's needs, or organized simple exercises like map drawing, which they discovered could reveal volumes about the residents' fears, insecurities, and priorities. Creative ways of eliciting responses became an integral part of the methodology used by the group.5

At an intensely personal level a process of both turmoil and transformation was taking place in the hearts and minds of the Athwaas group. The people of Kashmir had experienced more than a decade of violence. The members of Athwaas were (and are) spatially located in this theatre of violent conflict. At the beginning of the journey the attitude of the Athwaas group to acts of violence had been ambivalent and such acts had been selectively criticized depending on the

identity of the perpetrator. A process of inner transformation set in when they actually met those women who had been victimized by violence. Gradually there emerged a consensus among Athwaas members rejecting violence irrespective of whether the horrors had been perpetrated by militants fighting for the "cause" or by members of the Indian security forces.

Another process of emotional turmoil and transformation occurred when the Athwaas group visited the camps of Jammu after their travels in North and South Kashmir. The realization that the pain of one community does not cancel out the pain of the other — that Kashmiri Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs had all suffered, though in qualitatively different ways, was poignantly driven home when they actually transcended the emotional and geographical divide to visit each other's realities.

**An Inclusive Network of Kashmiri Women**

In recent months the Athwaas journey has taken a new turn with the setting up of Samanbal Centres in North and South Kashmir and in a migrant camp in Jammu. "Samanbal" is a Kashmiri term used to describe a place where women can meet to share their hopes, joys and sorrows. This milestone in the journey of Athwaas came about when individual members volunteered to take responsibility for local initiatives which would provide a physical space and a tangible context for women to come together to re-build trust and re-open spaces for reconciliation. Each center does have a central activity such as computer training, embroidering and tailoring, or sharing of counseling skills — but this merely provides the context for women to come together to share their joys and pain and to think in terms of collective action.

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It has not always been an easy process, but slowly and surely, mutual trust and greater understanding have grown among the Athwaas participants – and ultimately, bonds have been forged that would not have been possible previously. Those touched are reaching out to others, so that the "space" is constantly expanding. As WISCOMP and Athwaas forge ahead to identify and create more constituencies of peace there is a firm belief that the processes set in place will be able be sustained. This is because the initiative in Kashmir was shaped by the notion that no outside agency can impose a solution — the solution would have to come from within and the women of Kashmir must have a voice in deciding the nature and the pace of movement along the road whose end destination is transformation of the conflict. Because of this Athwaas was formed as an inclusive network of Kashmiri women, its composition representing the rich cultural diversity that is so much a part of its historical legacy.

Because one of the objectives of Athwaas is for women to transcend the cultural, experiential, and spiritual differences that have long served as barriers, it is difficult to point to tangible evidence of its impact. But attitudes have softened, women have reached across the divide, they are prepared, sometimes for the first time, to listen to the "other", and a thirst for vengeance has been supplanted by an urge to reconcile.

Perhaps the most unique aspect of the initiative has been its exploratory nature. There were no rigid notions about which strategies would or would not work. For WISCOMP, working with political uncertainties and an ever-changing environment of violence has meant continuous assessment of the possibilities, and adapting to changing circumstances. WISCOMP has continued to encourage the Athwaas initiative to strive toward the ideal that women must ultimately rely on their own strength and reserves to rebuild their lives in a zone of conflict. The

personal transformation of many members, the establishment of the Samanbals and the opportunity it has presented WISCOMP to build on this unique exercise are testimonies to the realization of the vision called Athwaas.6

* Meenakshi Gopinath initiated WISCOMP in 1999 and currently serves as honorary director. She is involved in various multi-track peace initiatives in the South Asian region and writes frequently on issues relating to gender, security and peacebuilding. Sumona DasGupta is senior program officer at WISCOMP. She holds a doctoral degree in Social Science and recently concluded a collaborative research study entitled *Crossing Lines with the Gender Lens: Interrogating the Dominant Narratives on the Causes of Conflict in Kashmir.*

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**Notes**

1 Basu, *Building Constituencies of Peace*. For an account of the proceedings of this Roundtable see DasGupta, *Breaking the Silence*.

2 For an account on the birth of Athwaas and its guiding principles see Kaul Bhatia, *Transcending Faultlines.*

3 Ashima Kaul Bhatia, Personal Diary, unpublished, 2001

4 Personal observations of the Athwaas group.

5 The WISCOMP team has documented the proceedings of each of the workshops in a series titled Stakeholders in Dialogue, WISCOMP, Foundation for Universal Responsibility of His

Holiness the Dalai Lama, New Delhi, 2004.

6 Basu, *Building Constituencies of Peace*.

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## 7.2 The Other Clan: Save Somali Women and Children

***Somali women are the main victims of the inter-clan violence that has torn their country apart for nearly fifteen years. Yet they were excluded from both war councils and peace talks - until a group of activists boldly crossed ethnic and gender barriers.***

The atmosphere was tense, the mood expectant. As the powerful warlords listened patiently, the president departed from his prepared text and made a somber appeal. President Kibaki said:

"You have been wishing and wishing for these fourteen years you have been fighting. Now that peace has been found… do not look back to the dark days."

The scene was State House, Nairobi, Kenya. The date: January 29, 2004. The warlords addressed by the Kenyan leader were responsible for one of Africa's longest running civil conflicts. They had bargained hard, and long. No one was under the illusion the power-sharing deal they were there to sign, would end the long-running conflict immediately. But hopes were raised by the involvement of all the main combatants.

There was another reason why the function was noteworthy. For the first time, a woman - Asha Hagi Elmi - was signatory to a Somali peace agreement. As chairlady of Save Somali Women and Children, a body that promotes women human rights and programs to empower women, Elmi was at the forefront of sustained efforts over many years, to break down clan barriers and overcome deep-rooted gender bias.

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The Nairobi signing ceremony marked a new highpoint for those efforts.

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**A state without a government**

Somalia is a coastal state in the Horn of Africa, bordered by Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya. Since the fall of the Siad Barre regime in 1991, it has had no central government. Clans and sub-clans carved out their own fiefdoms. Their constant battles for control left human suffering and a scarred urban landscape. International intervention, in the form of UN peacekeepers, lasted for three years (1992-1995) before ending in failure. Since then, divided and poverty-stricken, Somalia has alternated between all-out conflict and broken peace deals. The conflict has killed and injured many, and displaced hundreds of thousands. A UN Security Council report in June 2003, said approximately 400,000 Somalis were refugees in neighboring countries. Up to 370,000 others were internally displaced. They had no basic services such as water, health facilities or schools.

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***Create a new Beginning***

Two years earlier, in a major breakthrough at the Somali Peace and Reconciliation Conference in Arta, Djibouti, women were represented at the negotiating table for the first time. Save Somali Women and Children got the four clans and coalition of smaller ones - the main combatants – in Arta to accept women as equal partners.

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Operating as a "Sixth Clan" at those peace talks – held from May-October, 2000 - they got participants to consider unfamiliar issues like affirmative action, women's access and control over resources, and the impact of war on women and children. This involvement redefined the whole process.

Like any country whose social fabric is torn apart by war, the peace negotiations in Somalia offered a chance to create a new beginning. The women groups were able to convince the clans whose rivalry fuelled the conflict, to accept a new and enhanced role for them – around the negotiating table, and in the political structures considered during the talks. They achieved this through advocacy, lobbying and awareness-raising.

The formation of this Sixth Clan was significant because traditionally in Somalia, women were not allowed full membership of the tightly woven clan and sub-clan structures. This is where the power has rested, especially since the collapse of the central government in 1991. So that although they were the main victims of the conflict, women had no say in either war decisions or peace efforts.

In addition, the clan system also formed a protective shield around combatants, impeding attempts to end indiscriminate acts of violence against women.

Even getting a seat around the table involved a major struggle. The women had to convince skeptical clan leaders and militia figures – and women from within their own ranks – of the need for the peace process to be more gender-sensitive. Their progress, says Elmi,

"did not come by accident, but through well directed, daring struggles, carried out in phases, spearheaded by conscious women leaders in cooperation with the enlightened segments of civil society and the international community.

*Our main agenda was to vote for participatory peace and change as the basis of a new Somalia. We wanted to facilitate the creation of a stable, democratic and competitive state in which respect for human rights was preserved."*

Because they shared a common gender spirit, and had similar national aspiration and vision for a peaceful and modern Somalia, the Sixth Clan became a distinctive presence in Arta. Their approach and the demands they made for inclusive, fair and non-biased participation, were different - and new.

As the negotiations progressed, and participants cemented mutual trust, their role evolved. They were no longer viewed as a special interest group but respected participants. On occasion, the women were even called on to resolve disputes between the traditional clans. Eventually the atmosphere became "very friendly", says Elmi.

The final National Document agreed on in Arta, included gender rights responsive clauses and an affirmative action quota for women's representation in the transitional House of Representatives. The women groups also secured favorable changes to clauses for the preservation of human rights of women, children and minorities and got agreement on other sound democratic principles that, at least on paper, ranked among the best in the Greater Horn Area. Strategic alliances and close working relationships established with other stakeholders, gave the group

considerable leverage outside of the peace negotiations. "Our lobbying measures paid off and superseded the counter efforts," says Elmi.

**Critical Role**

Faiza Jama Mohamed of Equality Now - an organization that works for protection and promotion of women human rights around the world - credits Somali women with playing a critical role in steering the country in the direction of peace. In a speech to the UN Security Council in 2000, she noted that over the years - from the early period of the crisis - groups of Somali women worked to transcend artificial boundaries created by the political and social system. Their "strong and sustained" efforts included community action to improve security, rehabilitation programs aimed at re-integrating ex-members of militias into normal society, and human rights programs. Save Somali Women and Children was set up in 1992 as crisis deepened in the wake of the overthrow of Siad Barre. It was formed by a group of activists and intellectuals to offer practical services to women in areas like human rights and micro-credit, and facilitate reconciliation between factions by mobilizing women from different clans and sub-clans to diffuse tensions. The Arta Peace Conference laid such a strong basis for involvement of women in the peace process that when the Somalia Reconciliation Conference – staged under auspices of the Inter-Governmental Authority for Development (IGAD) - began at Eldoret, Kenya in October 2002, the presence of Save Somali Women and Children was no surprise.

After Arta, women's organizations held a workshop on Post-Arta Role and Responsibility of Women in the Promotion of Somalia Peace and Reconciliation Process, to strengthen grassroots

organizations through managerial and logistical support. Training in leadership was provided at a course held in Mogadishu, the Somali capital, in September 2002. Thirty-five women leaders, activists, politicians and professionals attended this workshop, sponsored by womankind worldwide. Its aim was to improve capacity and skills to enhance the role of women in the peace process as equal partners in decision-making.

The workshop recommended that women unite under the banner of the Sixth Clan, adhere to its principles and work to realize its vision.

"The role that women could play in peace building is absolutely crucial - as mothers who educate their children, wives who advise their husbands and the vital link between families and the communities… As citizens in their own right, women should be treated as focal points, who are capable of breaking down barriers in the quest for peace, reconciliation and national cohesion."

So that by the time the Kenya peace conference began, a wide cross section of women were well aware of the issues at stake and the significance of getting gender demands accepted. They lobbied hard on the outside to support the gender issues raised inside – especially the demand for 25 percent women participation in all institutions created through the IGAD negotiations.

After the peace deal was signed at State House in Nairobi, the factional leaders walked in triumph towards tents spaced out on the grounds. They were greeted by the ululations of joyful supporters. They hugged each other – remarkable, considering that they hardly addressed each other at the start of the negotiations.

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**Reason to be Proud**

Elmi noted that, despite these happy scenes, Somali women still faced pervasive violence and harmful traditional practices. They still lived, after all, in a culture based on male preference.

*"We are confronted by new civil", she said, "wars that have created internally displaced persons, the majority of them women."*

Especially in Mogadishu, the capital, the security situation remained volatile. It would take time for the structures agreed on, to be put in place.

Even so, Somali women had reason to feel proud of the distance traveled by the "sixth clan". Two years after their historic intervention at Arta, the Federal Charter of Somali signed in Nairobi, stipulated that at least 12 percent of the new 275-member parliament must be women. The deal called for setting up a transitional government to run Somalia as a federal system for five years while a constitution was being completed.

As Nyaradzai Gumbonzvanda, regional director of the United Nations Fund for Women noted:

"We can learn a lot from Somali women. They came together and organized themselves and now the Charter recognizes them."

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www.womenwarpeace.org/somalia/somalia.htm (Unifem)

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## 7.3 Women Weaving Bougainville Together: Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency – Papua New Guinea

***In the Pacific island of Bougainville, there is compelling evidence that it was the persistence of women's grassroots efforts that led to the ending of ten years of war. A weeklong search of some 700 women on how to bring about peace, worked as a catalyst.***

The stereotype of the Pacific island as lushly landscaped and socially tranquil, was tainted in the late 1980s when separatist rebels on Bougainville took up arms against the central government in Papua New Guinea. The ensuing civil war was bloody and intense. At its height, government troops blockaded the island. Medicines, clothing and food supplies were restricted. Guerrillas targeted anyone suspected of being opposed to independence.

The blockade led to the closure of schools. Hospitals and health centers had no medicines. People lived off the land, generating electricity from hydropower and solar panels. They resorted to using coconut oil to operate chainsaws and run vehicles and bush remedies in place of normal medication.

### Clandestine Networks

It was in response to this crisis - and a beleaguered population's cry for humanitarian aid - that Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency was established in 1992. Its motto - "Women weaving Bougainville together" - reflected its approach. The organization was part of a humanitarian network of like-minded bodies that found self-reliant and sustainable solutions as a

way out of the crisis. These included the Catholic Women's Association, and Bougainville Community Integrated Development Agency.

These organizations distributed food, clothing and medicines to a deprived population in both government zones and areas controlled by the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA). The clandestine networks they set up became the only sources of emergency assistance.

"We were very resourceful,' says Helen Hakena, executive director of the Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency and one of the organization's founders. "We learnt how to look after ourselves."

Through prayer meetings, reconciliation ceremonies, peace marches and petitions, they took a political stand against violence. One silent march against the use of rape as a weapon, drew 1,000 women. Hakena:

*"We just couldn't stay and watch while our sisters died in childbirth, were raped, sexually harassed and emotionally abused. After watching women suffer the most tragic deaths, I was determined to do all I could to end the violence and deprivation. Nobody every thought there would be a civil war. Nobody ever thought that we would die at the hands of our own people."*

Hakena was herself a victim. In 1990 she was seven months pregnant when armed men stormed her house. "I was a teacher before the crisis. Our home was the first to burn. My village was burnt down the next day." She escaped. While on the run, she gave birth, prematurely, to her son, Max, on the floor of an abandoned bank building.

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Such experiences were commonplace. Women were most at risk from physical violence and sexual exploitation. They suffered most from personal hardships caused by the blockade. More than 90 percent of refugees in care centers were women and children. It was the women, too, who were in the forefront of the civilian response.

**Public Protest**

In 1990, on the island of Buka a group of women staged public protest when a BRA blockade prevented soldiers from the Papua New Guinea Defence Force from distributing emergency medical supplies. The woman who led the march, Anastasia La Pointe, confronted the BRA commanders. "I told them that it was a women's initiative. If we had involved men, there would have been trouble," she said.

The following month, women from Selau in northern Bougainville, staged a march and appealed to both the Papua New Guinea Defence force and BRA to put down arms and start peace negotiations. That was followed by an all-night vigil for peace. Five thousand people attended, including children and some BRA members. Selau was declared a "Peace Area" in August 1991. Steps were taken there to disarm local BRA forces.

Traditional Bougainville society is matrilineal: the women's line determines kinship and the inheritance and use of land rights. "Women," goes a local saying, "are mothers of the land". Their authority is respected; the word of the woman carries weight.

As the conflict intensified, some women used this status to negotiate peace in their communities, acting as intermediaries to maintain dialogue. In July 1996, after seven years of war and many formal negotiations for peace failed, about 700 Bougainville women met in Arawa for a

weeklong search of how to bring about peace. The meeting became a major catalyst for peace. As a result of that meeting, women began working more actively for peace within their communities. Some mothers went into the bush and tried to convince their sons to return home, helping them to resettle to village life. In some areas, they entered the jungle and negotiated with BRA leaders.

The influence of women was also evident during the crisis over the employment of mercenaries from Sandline International by the Papua New Guinea government. A delegation of women traveled to Port Moresby, the capital, to present a written petition opposing the move to the prime minister's office.

And fifty women from Bougainville traveled to Lincoln, New Zealand for meetings that led, eventually, to the signing of the Lincoln Peace Agreement in January 1998, which laid the groundwork for the eventual ceasefire in the territory. They drafted their own parallel statement outlining their role in the process. "We, the women, hold custodial rights over our land by clan inheritance. We insist that women leaders must be party to all stages of the political process in determining the future of Bougainville."

The impact of these activities – a mix of outspoken criticism and quiet, behind-the-scenes initiatives - is hard to measure. However, most observers say the role played by grassroots women's organizations like the Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency helped ease the suffering of civilians, and alerted the international community.

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**Putting Women in Positions of Power**

When the blockade eased, they shifted attention to reconstruction. Programs were developed to address trauma and dislocation caused by the civil war, and help restore damaged civil structures. The Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency, which was a winner of the First Millennium Peace Prize for Women in 2001, initiated a two-year peacebuilding project in which trained volunteers – including ex-combatants – taught women and children about HIV/AIDS and the threats of substance abuse, and women's human rights.

The organization also confronted a new scourge: domestic violence. A culture of abuse on the island made life hellish for many women. Rape, incest, child abuse and domestic violence were rampant. Of particular concern was so-called homebrew abuse – violence fuelled by a potent locally made alcoholic beverage that became popular on the island after the conflict. Its widespread use by young men, is linked to the soaring rates of domestic violence.

The Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency offered counseling services to help women and young people deal with the emotional trauma of violence. Between 2000 and 2003, it assisted more than 1,400 victims. "Wife-beating is an everyday thing," one of the women assisted with counseling, said. "But women don't report it because they know the police will say it's just a domestic thing."

The organization also assisted in the rehabilitation of ex-combatants. It used ex-guerrillas as role models at anti-violence workshops. Says Hakena:

"Peace will be just a dream if people's minds are not healed. It will take years to rehabilitate a people who have been severely affected by an uprising such as the Bougainville crisis."

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She believes that ultimately, putting women in positions of power can break the cycle of violence.

"The crisis here started about land rights – the Panguna mine, its destruction of the environment and the lack of compensation it gave to communities around the mine. Up until the crisis, decisions about who could use land may have been made by women at the back, but it was the men at the front doing the talking."

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**A long history of foreign influence**

Bougainville is one of a cluster of some forty islands comprising Papua New Guinea (PNG), a country located northwards of Australia in the South Pacific. PNG became independent from Australia in 1975. Bougainville was named after French explorer Louis-Antoine de Bougainville, who landed there in 1768. The island has a long history of foreign influence - indigenous feelings run high.

In 1989, separatists in the Bougainville Revolutionary Army, declared a "republic of Bougainville" and took up arms. Their campaign raised questions about environmental destruction and other aspects of the operations of Australian copper mining companies. The Panguna copper mine – then the biggest in the world - was forced to close.

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Fighting between the BRA and the Papua New Guinea armed forces continued almost unabated for nine years. The blockade imposed on Bougainville during this time imposed grave economic and other hardships on top of the constant threat of violence from the armed conflict.

The island was divided into pockets of rebel-controlled zones and government zones. In the army-controlled areas, nightly curfews and restrictions were imposed. This limited freedom of movement. Education and health services were disrupted. More than half the population of Bougainville was displaced. Thousands of women and children housed in care centers, had no access to basic services. Malnutrition and poverty were widespread. Thousands died from the fighting, and from shortages of medicine and food.

In 1998, a fragile peace treaty was signed between the rebels and the Papua New Guinea government. That was followed, in August 2001, by the signing of the Bougainville Peace Agreement in Arawa providing for a referendum in 10-15 years on the future political status of the island.

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Women's groups have called for the setting up of a women's body supplementary to the Bougainville Autonomous government. So far, lobbying efforts have secured four places for women in the provincial government.

Whether they will play key roles in the structures of the new autonomous government, remains an open question. Women were under-represented in the new political organs established under the peace accords. There were only six women of the 106 members of the appointed

Bougainville People's Congress. Only two were included in the 52-strong Bougainvillean delegation at the September 2001 talks on autonomy, referendum and arms disposal.

Nonetheless, as Helen Hakena points out,

"Women are not passive victims. We are contributing actively… our courage and contributions have made the world a better place to live and work."

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**Resources**

www.c-r.org/accord/boug/accord12/index.shtml (on the Bougainville Peace process)

www.womenwarpeace.org/bougainville (UNIFEM)

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## 7.4 The Fate of the Disappeared Children: Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina

***It was one of the darkest episodes in Argentine history: the disappearances of thousands of opponents of military rule. Many detainees had young children; they also "disappeared". For nearly thirty years, a group of women have fought to discover their fate. What began as essentially a personal struggle, involving their own flesh and blood, has transformed lives, changed laws and inspired a whole country in the pursuit of truth.***

On April 30, 1977, a small group of women gathered in Plaza de Mayo, Buenos Aires' airy main square, and, in the shadows of the cluster of government buildings located there – including the presidential palace and Ministry of Interior – they staged a poignant protest. Marching in circles, and holding aloft placards and photos of loved ones, they demanded answers to a painful question.

The women, soon christened after their regular, almost ritualistic vigils in the square, *Abuelas de La Plaza de Mayo* (Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo), were protesting the detention of sons and daughters accused of subversion by the military dictatorship, and demanding the return of babies snatched from these "disappeared".

Human rights groups estimate 80 percent of those detained – anywhere between 10,000 and 30,000 people - were aged between 16-35 years. Thirty percent were women. Ten percent were

pregnant when taken into custody and gave birth in detention centers. Their babies were taken away.

Other 'missing' children were kept by authorities in the same detention camps as their parents or other relatives. Eventually, they were given new identities and placed in special homes, or adopted by military officers and their friends. An estimated 500 children vanished in this way during the period of military rule (1976-1983).

**Emotional Strain**

Formally constituted as an organization in 1983, Abuelas de La Plaza de Mayo enlisted help from volunteers, to force the government into disclosing the identities of these children. The effort had both political and personal dimensions, for there was no doubting the emotional strain of coping with discovering one's lost identity and connecting with newly discovered blood relatives.

Initially, the Grandmothers' search centered on hospitals and detention centers. They petitioned juvenile courts, scoured orphanages and baby care centers. Medical and birth certificates and adoption papers were checked and double-checked; they combed archives. They were turned away from many doors. "We can do nothing; go away," people told them. "They paid five million for the babies, so they are in good hands." "Do not be concerned."

Their direct appeals to churches got encouragement from some bishops and priests, but not much concrete assistance. Undaunted, the women published announcements in the most important newspapers appealing for information. They printed posters and leaflets and solicited successive military governments, the Supreme Court, United Nations and Organization of American States.

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Thousands of petitions were filed on behalf of family members, relatives of families, and children who had doubts about their identity. Investigations were launched whenever a potential "disappeared" child was found. In such instances, both judicial and psychological factors were examined before the case was handed over to the appropriate authorities.

The Grandmothers argued that the children had an inalienable right to have their own identity and live with their natural families. In other words, they, too, were entitled to national and internationally recognized rights. Also, they insisted the victims were kidnapped as part of political repression, therefore the cloak of impunity should be removed from the military men involved.

Further, they demanded legislation to preserve the right to identify and bring those responsible for kidnapping children to justice while ensuring such atrocities never happened again. In this regard, they published announcements in local newspapers calling on people with information about atrocities to come forward. Posters and leaflets were distributed with photographs and relevant details of the disappeared children.

The focus of the Grandmothers was as much on raising public awareness about human rights in general as the rights of children. In one landmark case, in 1994, the organization obtained a favorable declaration from the Supreme Court supporting its position that adoption of minors who had disappeared was null and void and in violation of the law. That ruling paved the way for obtaining court orders to prosecute ex-military leaders responsible for kidnapping and other atrocities.

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**International Attention**

These activities drew international attention to the human rights situation in Argentina. Over time, a network of national and international solidarity was built up: links were established with like-minded and relevant groups and organizations and teams of professionals.

This enabled a collaborative approach, combining activists and professionals. This was key given the limited experience, and lack of expertise, of these devoted women in areas like law, genetics and psychology. Through a successful lobbying effort, articles 7, 8 and 11 - on the right of children to preserve his or her identity, including nationality, name and family relations – were inserted into the Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989. Eventually, Article 8 of that convention was incorporated into new adoption legislation in Argentina.

In the search for "missing" children, the organization found the easiest approach was to find records related to those who were confiscated immediately after birth. With regard to children born in detention, the real identity of the parents had to be determined. That meant widening the net.

The trail took the Grandmothers and their volunteers to researchers and experts in the field of genetics. Traveling to Sweden, France and the United States, they found out that it was possible to prove with 99.95 percent accuracy that a child belonged to a given family through specific blood analysis on the grandparents, the brothers or sisters and the aunts and uncles of the victims. With international support, the women were able to lobby for the creation of a National Bank of Genetic Data to preserve the genetic data of relatives of disappeared children. Located in Buenos

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Aires, the capital, this is the only bank of its kind in the world. It has become a model for other countries.

**Genetic Data**

Over thirty children have had their identity established in this way, using this blood sample information. In March 1987, the Argentine Congress unanimously approved a law requiring any child with suspicious adoption records to have their DNA checked against that of relatives of the disappeared stored in the databank. In 1997, legislation was passed giving full access to adoption records at the age of 18. The same legislation invalidated adoptions of kidnapped children.

A total of 77 missing children have been re-united with their natural families as a result of the efforts of the Grandmothers. Some decided to live with their legitimate families. Others remained with the family that raised them and kept in contact with blood relatives.

The deeply emotional nature of discovering one's real identity after so long, is exemplified by the example of Horacio Pietragalla Corti, one of the babies snatched and handed over for adoption. He discovered his true origins - he was born to two "disappeared" persons – only in 2003, after taking a DNA test. His real name was Cesar Sebastian Castillo, and his real birthday March 11, 1976 – not May 22, 1977 as he grew up thinking.

Horacio recalls the first meeting with his biological family as "very tough":

"I was really hoping to meet my grandparents. Unfortunately, by then, all of them had died. And this is one of the things that hurts and upsets me the most. I have more photos than living people, to enjoy."

The Grandmothers have devoted considerable attention to this aspect of their work – dealing with trauma associated with restored identity. With support from the European Union, a rehabilitation center was set up to extend and improve the quality of work being done in this area. Professional volunteers have been drafted into a team to support and help with re-integration.

With help from specialists and professionals from diverse areas, an Inter-disciplinary Dialogue for Identity was launched – a sort of forum for sharing knowledge. Such efforts have been combined with other psycho-rehabilitative tools including theatre, music, cinema, plastic arts and literature. Over time, with experience gathered by closely following the process of child restitution, they have learned to determine what the child perceives and thinks, what affects him/her, what he/she considers of value.

**In the Pursuit of Truth**

In 1997, when the organization celebrated its 20th anniversary, its members and supporters realized they were no longer dealing with young girls and boys but grown-ups. They also became aware that the question of identity involved social as well as individual meditation.

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So now the Grandmothers – who received the 1999 World Methodist Peace Award – struggle for core objectives of restoring the identity of the "missing", while adapting to new methods and broadening the range of their work.

For example, they have secured the support of Argentine sports stars to make appeals on their behalf. The organization's ideas on the right to identity, have been popularized by music and television stars and in the successful theatrical work *A propósito de la duda* (With regards to the doubt) in 2000, which was seen by more than 20,000 young people. In April, 2000, the film *Botín de Guerra* (War booty), which summarized the history of Abuelas and told the story of the children, won several awards at the film festival in Valladolid, Spain, and the Ecumenical Prize at the Berlin Film Festival.

The women, who now gather in front of the Plaza de Mayo only on commemorative days, can look back on nearly thirty years of struggle that has gradually removed the walls of silence that existed about the period. Their experience underlines the value of networking, persistence, creativity and willingness to learn from experiences of others and incorporate this knowledge in their own work.

Their activities kept the issue of "disappeared" children in the forefront of the Argentine conscience for almost thirty years. Their actions have restored lost identities, led to the creation of a National Bank of Genetic Data, and drawn the international spotlight onto the general human rights situation in Argentina - at a time when many people were too scared to speak out. With their distinctive trademark white scarves and protest method – the women march in circles

to circumvent a law against group assembly – they have become one of the most widely known protest groups in the world.

What began as essentially a personal struggle, involving their own flesh and blood, has transformed lives, changed laws and inspired a whole country in the pursuit of truth. Their watchwords – "truth" and "justice" – brought home to Argentines the lesson that the main way to avoid conflict was not to conceal the past but by discussing it openly.

***Contact***

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***Website***

www.abuelas.org.ar

***Sources***

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**<Box>**

**Cuban Ladies in White**

Every Sunday morning, dozens of women dressed in white with only a few details in black on their clothing, solemnly wait to receive the communion in the churches of Santa Rita of Cassis in Miramar, the capital district of Havana. The rest of the parishioners watch the women - who invoke with their prayers of faith, hope and love the freedom of their loved ones - with respect and admiration.

They are Las Damas de Blanco (Ladies in White), a group consisting of the wives of some 75 political prisoners in Cuba – sentenced to long prison terms for having committed the "crime of opinion" – who have formed a new movement of pacifist protest in Havana. They try to obtain the release of their husbands and fight, in a notorious but silent way, for the respect for human rights on the island.

Some with small children, others with their grandchildren, the courage of these women has left the world's public opinion in awe, seeing them defending their families with such strength and bravery.

Together, the Ladies in White respectfully attend different masses and ceremonies that are celebrated in catholic churches in honor of the Virgin Mercedes, whom they, by doing so, consequently have transformed into their patron saint and protector.

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Once a month they get together to hold literature meetings, where they, while sharing cups of tea, recite poems of Raul Rivero, probably the best-known Cuban political prisoner. Their methods are simple. They hold fasts, days of abstinence and long silent walks on the Avenida de Miramar as a signal of their peaceful protest asking for the freedom of those that have been imprisoned unjustly.

The Ladies in White let their claims be heard, while at the same time expressing a clear message of solidarity:"We are living here in Cuba, our husbands are political prisoners here in Cuba and we demand our human rights from the Cuban government. We, the wives of the political prisoners – who are not 75, but closer to 300 – claim the help of the international community to support us in our search for the freedom of our husbands and family members. We hope to have the support of intellectuals from all over the world."

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## 7.5 Women's Peace Activism in West Africa: The WIPNET Experience

***The Mass Action for Peace and women's participation in the Liberian peace process exemplifies how women can contribute significantly both during peace processes, and in the building of post-conflict societies. The rebuilding of the new Liberia continues and at each stage women are included and invited to participate. There is no doubt that the invaluable contribution of WIPNET, MARWOPNET and other women's groups is responsible for this development.*** By Thelma Aremiebi Ekiyor and Leymah Roberta Gbowee*

In October 1929, the women of Aba in Eastern Nigeria rose up in protest against tax policies, low prices for locally produced goods, the artificially high prices of imported goods, and their hatred of the British appointed *warrant chiefs* and the *native courts*. Ten thousand women attacked key targets such as the native courts, European-owned factories and warrant chiefs presiding over the courts. The women's uprising effectively ended the warrant chief system. Though they were second-class citizens with no formal influence over governance, security, or economics, the Aba women forced a change in African society by using their numbers, their ability to mobilize, and their role in traditional society.

To some extent, the legacy and spirit of the Aba women has remained alive in West Africa, as women's groups have continued to use their numerical strength, sisterhood, and shared experiences to bring about change. Unfortunately, since the mid-1980s social changes have been overshadowed by the plague of armed conflict, and especially the fourteen years of war in

Liberia, which has spilled over the country's borders causing horrible suffering throughout the region. Under the circumstances, development has come to a virtual halt.

Starting in 2001 though, women once again played an important role in shaping events with the Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET), helping to push the reluctant warring factions to reach an agreement to end the war in Liberia.

**Chaos in Liberia**

Although Liberia's warring parties reached a settlement in 1997, and Charles Taylor assumed the presidency, the violence soon started again. By early 1999, hundreds of thousands of Liberians were forced to flee their homes. An estimated 20,000 child soldiers were fighting for both the rebels and the government. Unaccompanied girls were often captured by combatants and civilian men and used either as forced laborers or as "wives". Women also suffered enormously; many as victims of sexual assaults and rape. When they managed to avoid the fighting, they still had the task of raising and fending for children and elderly under extremely difficult conditions.

Women served in many other roles as well: as combatants, peacemakers at all levels of society, providers of sanctuary, and as informal mediators. Yet women were largely absent from formal peace processes and peace-building initiatives implemented by NGOs.

Reacting to this the West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) decided to establish a Women in Peacebuilding program in 2001. WANEP was convinced that a better understanding of women's experiences and their contributions to peace was important for developing informed and sustainable peacebuilding strategies.

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After thorough consultations with women's groups across West Africa, WANEP launched a regional network called Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET). The goal was to use "women's peace activism" to promote social justice. Women's peace activism was defined not just as anti-war activism, but as the deconstruction of structural forms of violence existing in everyday society. This activism was built on a particular ideology: that systematic violence against women such as rape, forced prostitution, mutilation etc, was an expression of a deeper systemic disregard for women existing in West African societies. By using women's numerical strength and their ability to mobilize around key issues, it would be possible to ensure that they could play a central role in formal peace processes and decision making in the region.

Following its launch in 2001, WIPNET developed a training manual on peacebuilding; helped to organize numerous regional women's peace networks; organized training workshops, conferences, and other meetings; conducting research; published stories on women's peacebuilding activities; engaged in peacebuilding and democracy-building activities in Nigeria, Guinea Bissau, Senegal, The Gambia, and Mali; and undertook a range of other activities to build regional peace and mobilize women.

**Mass Action for Peace**

The role WIPNET played in the Liberian peace process is almost certainly its most significant success. By early 2003, WIPNET-Liberia had a substantial network of community-based women's groups. In May 2003, rebel forces controlled most of the Liberian countryside, and began to close in on the capital Monrovia. Women under the auspices of WIPNET, recalling the example of an advocacy campaign pursued by the Liberian Women's Initiative between 1994

and 1996, decided that they would not sit on the sidelines. The experiences of LWI, whose members had engaged in weapons collection activities and, more significantly attendance at the peace talks, guided WIPNET. Etweda Cooper of LWI served as WIPNET-Liberia's National Adviser throughout this process. WIPNET tagged the campaign *Mass Action For Peace*. Women from all levels of Liberian society were recruited: from displaced camps, churches, markets, schools, ordinary jobs, and NGOs. The campaign chose a simple and effective message: *We Want Peace; No More War.* This message soon became a universal mantra and song.

Though all women were committed to the campaign, the greatest sacrifice came from women who had lost loved ones, or had been displaced or separated from their families. They said:

*"We have nothing to lose; we are ready to do what it takes to end this war."*

At first no one took the Mass Action seriously, but the women became a constant presence on the streets of Monrovia. Women carried placards and posters in Monrovia and Totota, and every day, rain or shine, Muslim and Christian women dressed in white came together to pray at the airfield. Bishops and imams came to the airfield to show their solidarity. Slowly, people started to take the women more seriously. The protest quickly spread to key sites in Monrovia, support grew, and the women learned how to effectively use the media to reach the international community. They even succeeded in pressuring President Charles Taylor into meeting with them, where they spelled out a clear program calling for an immediate unconditional ceasefire, dialogue for a negotiated settlement, and an intervention force.

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When a peace conference was organized in Accra, the Mass Action for Peace opened a new front. Maintaining a presence in Accra created new difficulties, especially because of the expenses involved. Previously, WIPNET had succeeded in securing funds for the mass action, but contributions for the presence in Accra were harder to come by. Fortunately, they did secure funding and a delegation of seven women left for Accra on May 26. Once in Accra, they mobilized Liberian women living in Accra, including residents of the Buduburam refugee camp, to join the campaign.

WIPNET used the media in both Accra and Liberia to excellent effect, and recruited WIPNET members from Northern Ghana to join them for a demonstration at the Akosombo conference center where the peace talks were to begin. Heads of States and other dignitaries were greeted by the sight of women sitting on the lawn holding placards demanding peace. Other women's groups like the Mano River Women Peace Network (MARWOPNET) and Liberian Women in the Diaspora were delegates at the talks. WIPNET, in collaboration with other women's organizations, issued strongly-worded statements expressing concern about civilian casualties in Liberia, and appealing to the United Nations Security Council to deploy an intervention force. The spirit of collaboration would continue among the women's groups for the duration of the peace talks.

WIPNET was also meeting with all parties to the conflict, and with the mediators, including the chief mediator, Abdusalami Abubakar. Since the women were seen as speaking for the "ordinary Liberians", all sides, including the rebels, sought to forge alliances with them, which meant that they had extraordinary access.

During the talks, WIPNET also organized a Liberian Women's Forum alongside the peace talks, where women could reflect on progress at the talks, while stress the importance of continuing with the campaign and not being sidetracked by the politics that surrounded the talks.

As the talks dragged on, there were further funding problems and tensions as some of the delegates worried about their relatives back in Liberia. Eventually, four of the seven women returned home, but they were replaced by Liberian women from the refugee camp.

When the talks moved from Akosombo to Accra, the women decided they needed to adopt harsher nonviolent strategies. When the talks reached a stalemate, they barricaded the entrance of the talks preventing the mediators, the warring and other delegates from exiting the venue. The women insisted that the men would not leave till they took the process seriously and committed themselves to reaching an agreement. The new approach was effective, and the women were invited to participate in several meetings exploring strategies for peace with both the rebels and the mediators. Two members of WIPNET represented the women at the political and security committee meeting, to the surprise and consternation of military officials. For WIPNET, attendance at these meetings, where the basic issues concerning the future of Liberia were discussed, represented one of the great successes of the Mass Action. It had shown that the women were stakeholders in the conflict and had a role to play in the peace process.

On June 17th, a ceasefire agreement was signed, but fighting still raged as the parties worked to reach a comprehensive agreement. Several times, the talks stalled. It seemed as if Liberians were being held hostage by the delegates, so the women decided to turn the tables on them. WIPNET mobilized women and barricaded the entrance to the room where the negotiations were going on.

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The chief mediator pleaded with the women to move but they refused. They held up placards which said "Killers of our people no impunity this time," "Butchers and murderers of the Liberian people stop!" and "How many babies do you intend to slaughter?" The furor attracted the attention of the press and the standoff was televised. Partly in response to the publicity, the talks resumed. On August 11th, to the surprise of many, President Taylor agreed to resign. A week later, a comprehensive peace agreement was finally reached. Seventy-eight days of tumultuous peace talks ended and Gyude Bryant, a businessman, was selected as the interim chairman. It seemed like normalcy might return to Liberia. The WIPNET delegation returned to Liberia.

**Continuing the Work**

Following the peace, WIPNET remained active, organizing sensitization forums for women, raising their awareness of the content of the peace accord and the responsibilities of the parties to abide by it. WIPNET also marched to the headquarters of the peacekeeping force, both to thank them for bringing calm to Monrovia and to ask for a larger force. They then continued on to the American Embassy to ask the U.S. to provide more logistical support for the peacekeepers. Through its actions WIPNET earned the appreciation of the Liberian people. Recognizing the contributions of the women, the transitional government appointed WIPNET members to posts with governmental agencies, the National Human Rights Commission of Liberia, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. One member was named deputy minister for Foreign Affairs. By accepting these appointments, WIPNET is ensuring that women remain involved in decision-making. WIPNET has continued its Mass Action, with a daily presence at the airfield - serving as

a reminder that the women were "watching the peace" - and with a march through Monrovia to demand disarmament.

The Mass Action also continues in four other regions focusing on monitoring the implementation of the peace agreement. WIPNET is one of the institutions partnering with the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) to promote disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation activities, and continues to consult with the transitional leadership about Liberia's future. The WIPNET T-shirt is a major tool for accessing inaccessible areas. As WIPNET women enter communities they are greeted by children singing "We want peace, No more war".

**Successes**

Through the Mass Action, WIPNET booked several very important successes:

. *Created awareness:* The advocacy campaign raised awareness of the Liberia conflict among the citizens of the country. It uniquely targeted women in the rural communities and sensitized them on the important roles they could play in bringing peace to Liberia. For many women, the Mass Action was a training camp; it proved what women could do with the numbers, voices and strength and catapulted women from behind the scenes victims to front-line soldiers for peace.

. *Gave a human face to the conflict:* Peace processes are normally attended by the parties in conflict: government representatives and rebel groups. The presence of the women demonstrating at the talks, removed the focus from the warring factions, to the real people affected by the conflict. The Mass Action reminded everyone at the talks and the world at large that an entire population was waiting for the outcome and would not settle for anything less than peace.

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. *Exerted pressure on all sides at the peace table:* The Mass action was not a "respecter of persons". The women targeted all sides in the conflict; meeting with rebels, government representatives, mediators and the media and ensuring that the right amount of pressure was placed on each target to guarantee a comprehensive and truthful peace agreement.

. *Sustained action over an extended period of time:* Women's non-violent initiatives often lose steam due to lack of funding, poor morale among members, and frustration that the desired impact is not being achieved. This did not happen in the WIPNET Mass Action for Peace. Though there were daily challenges of poor morale, dwindling funds, and frustration, the women on this campaign were determined not to return to Liberia without a signed peace agreement. They kept referring to "their constituency", in Liberia who were suffering the ongoing bombardments between the rebels and government forces. This commitment sustained the campaign until the peace accord was signed.

**Challenges**

Certain challenges WIPNET faced and overcame are especially worth noting:

. *Organizing a campaign in a virtual police state where public gatherings, political activities and marches were prohibited, and fear of imprisonment and beatings prevailed.* The entire Mass Action for Peace was organized in a tense environment. The women in the campaign were regularly threatened by security forces with flogging, arrests etc.

. *Bridging a divide between the more educated "elite" and women from grassroots communities.* Initially the elite women in Monrovia did not want to be part of the Mass Action. It was viewed as a rural movement which would be a "flash in the pan". This was frustrating for the leaders of

the action who wanted all Liberian women to join forces in the campaign. Once the Mass Action gained recognition and began making impact locally and internationally, more elite women joined.

. *Meeting the costs, especially when the campaign moved to Accra.* Funding the campaign was a major challenge, the violence erupted and people had to respond to it. Women in the Mass action donated the market sales and savings to the campaign. Once the campaign moved to Accra this was very difficult, WANEP provided some funds but as this was not a budgeted activity the longer the talks went the harder the strain was on one organization to foot the bill. Supporters of WIPNET like the African Women Development Fund (AWDF), and Urgent Action Fund, met this challenge.

## Conclusion

WIPNET was green and perhaps naïve at the start of the campaign, but learned some key lesson, described below, during the Liberian peace process.

### The peace table is a myriad of peace, security, political, and economic interests

Though the peace process belonged to Liberians, the process was influenced by external governments and at times, the real objectives could have been subsumed to other interests. In retrospect it was probably a good thing that WIPNET was new to this process, as the women's intentions were pure and selfless.

### The peace table is structured to be an entirely male domain

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Men at the peace talks were comfortable with the women demonstrating and crying, but uncomfortable when women insisted on playing a substantive role. WIPNET came to understand that it should insist that the peace table was the domain of all the people, and the peace process should be open to participants in the process regardless of their gender.

**By their presence, WIPNET and other women's groups assured that women's issues would be addressed in shaping the new Liberia**

Though women's issues might have been addressed in any case, a possibility became a certainty.

**Adequate funding is essential**

At various points, the shortage of funds threatened the sustainability of the campaign.

**Building alliances is extremely important**

WIPNET was strengthened in its resolve by the alliances it forged with women's groups across Africa and across the globe, bolstered by local alliances with religious leaders, politicians, professors, and ordinary citizens.

**Preserving the psychosocial well being of women in the campaign was as important as the goal itself**

The women who left their families behind were under enormous stress. Many times, they questioned if anyone was listening. They kept themselves going through anecdotes and songs,

and were particularly inspired by the words of African-American Slave/Freedom Fighter Harriet Tubman:

"If you are tired keep going, if you are hungry keep going, if you are scared keep going, if you want a taste of freedom, keep going."

**Documentation is important**

By recording the daily activities of the action, WIPNET made it possible for generations of women from Liberia and across the world to share in and learn from their experiences.

**Conclusion**

Like the Aba women's riot in the last century, the WIPNET's Mass Action For Peace captured the imagination of West African women and has shown that women can influence change, foster peace and contribute to building equitable societies.

** Thelma Arimiebi Ekiyor is director of programs of WANEP, and was founder and first regional coordinator of WIPNET. Leymah Gbowee is the coordinator of Liberia and has been appointed on Liberia's Truth and Reconciliation Commission.*

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**Resources**

*Aba Women's Riots of October 1929* www.ngex.com/nigeria/history/aba_womens_riot.htm

Wanep women in Peacebuilding program reports

*The Female Combatant*. By Thelma Ekiyor. WANEP From the Field publication

**<Personal Story>**

**Civil Society Cannot Be Destroyed**

**Her Majesty Queen Noor**

My husband once said that "Peace is essential to us in leading a normal life, which is the legitimate right of every individual, in order to dream, plan for oneself, and for the future of one's family, to raise one's standard of living away from fear, worry and confusion."

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The desire to have a "normal life" and live in peace – for ourselves and our families - is one of the most intrinsic values we aspire to as human beings. It cuts across the racial, ethnic, gender, geographic, cultural and religious differences that seem to divide us and fuel the devastating conflicts, wars and humanitarian crises that destroy countless lives and tear nations apart.

For the better part of the last three decades, I have had the privilege to work beside and witness women, men and children who are giving up everything they have: creativity, time, resources, and all too often their own safety, to achieve peace and some semblance of normalcy amidst the most daunting challenges and conditions. Seemingly ordinary people under the most horrific circumstances exhibit extraordinary courage and strength as they reach out to others – to recover, to reconcile, to understand, to believe in the basic humanity of others, even of those some would call enemies.

Civil society, I have discovered, cannot be destroyed. It springs up, again and again, like a strong and beautiful flower from the ashes and rubble of conflict and deprivation. It endures because of everyday people - men, women, the young and old, survivors of chaos and conflict – who act and react to build a better life for themselves and future generations.

The most frequent victims of war and conflict are often innocent women and children. Yet, more often than not, these same individuals nurture the flowers of reconciliation, stability and peace.

**Breaking Down the Barriers**

For years I have worked with Seeds of Peace, an organization that brings together young people from conflict-torn regions to live and work together to begin to break down the barriers of

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ignorance and prejudice that generate confrontation over communication. Children face old animosities that have been passed down like legacies from their elders.

When they go home, they continue to hold out their hands and hearts to each other. Even now — especially now — Arab and Israeli Seeds graduates phone or e-mail across conflict lines to comfort their friends in the midst of the worst violence their region has seen. They risk the scorn of angry neighbors for the chance to meet and talk and grieve together. Sometimes, they risk their lives. But by those risks, they also inspire their families and neighbors to take a chance on hope and humanity. They have stared hatred in the face and refused to succumb.

In Colombia where two people are being killed everyday from landmines and half of all civilian mine victims are children, I met two young cousins, Jose and Jonathon, no more than 11 years old who encountered terror when they picked up what they thought was a toy rocket. They each lost a leg, their cousin Monica lost a leg, and Jose's younger brother perished. They are but a few of the thousands of victims of guerilla warfare, who have lost their innocence.

Now they are also survivors and teachers. Their new mission is to prevent future mine accidents and deaths. In a region where limited government resources exist and narco-guerilla warfare has festered for decades displacing millions of people, two hopeful souls educate local villagers and students about the dangers of landmines. One person at a time, they spread a message of prevention and awareness to thwart future deaths and disability.

I have also witnessed networks of courageous women raising their voices — and sometimes risking their lives — in conflict areas around the world from Africa and the Middle East to the Balkans. They nurture peace in different ways by working for what is best for their families,

cutting across ethnic, religious and tribal barriers, and breaking through seemingly impermeable obstacles to reconciliation and reconstruction.

After the war in Rwanda, fifty women, both Hutu and Tutsi, banded together in the Association of Widows to support each other and the war's orphans. The Mano River Union Women's Network for Peace brings women together to end conflict in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Israeli and Palestinian women have worked with each other — electronically, if violence prevents it physically — in organizations like Jerusalem Link and the Jerusalem Center for Women to further Middle East peace efforts.

Senator George Mitchell said women's weariness of conflict was a significant political force in achieving the Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland. War widows in Tajikistan who suffered through years of devastating civil war are now working together to understand their legal, social and economic constitutional and Islamic rights. Rural women whose main survival strategy has been to cultivate land are now working together to secure rights to access, manage and inherit land to provide for their families.

For me, the most wrenching and ultimately one of the most inspiring examples of collective action is in Bosnia, where thousands of women lost their families and their homes to ethnic cleansing.

I first traveled to Bosnia to reach out to the widows of Srebrenica in 1996, a year after 8,000 men and boys were marched away and never seen again. Several years later I returned as a member of the International Commission on Missing Persons. On two trips in 2001 I met with many of the same women still searching for news of their loved ones — unable to rest or begin to rebuild their lives without this knowledge, without assurances that the massacre would be memorialized

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officially and that those responsible would be held accountable. It is largely through their persistence that, eight years after the massacre, the prime minister of the Bosnian Serb Republic acknowledged the tragedy and paid tribute to the victims, and it was they who invited President Clinton to open the Srebrenica Memorial Center in September 2003.

All of these efforts have begun to bring some closure, at least as much as is possible, until those responsible are brought to justice. But nothing can ever dull the emotional pain these women, and other victims of war, have suffered.

And yet, as I have sat and wept with these women, as they struggled to come to terms with the deaths of their husbands, sons and fathers, I have marveled at their strength. I have seen them reach out to other women, some of whom may well be the wives or mothers of those who perpetrated the massacre. They have chosen to search for threads of humanity amidst the chaos and destruction of civil war.

Every one of these women, as they pick up the pieces of their shattered lives, is building a civil society that benefits not only them, but everyone in their region.

King Hussein frequently said, “it should never be forgotten that peace resides ultimately not in the hands of the governments, but in the hands of the people.” These extraordinary people that I have met throughout the world, with all their diversity, experiences, and circumstances, provide the seeds of hope for a better future for us all. That, ultimately, is what makes civil society — people voluntarily joined together for a common goal, for the common good. It is truly the most effective agent for peace we have.

**<End personal story>**

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## 7.6 Leaving Lebanon: Four Mothers Movement in Israel

***Three years of advocacy work helped an Israeli grass roots organization to achieve what it was aiming at: the withdrawal of the Israeli army from Lebanon, ending a long-lasting military operation the campaigners believed was senseless while costing the lives of dozens of Israeli and Lebanese sons.***

On the night of 4 February 1997, two Israeli helicopters transporting troops to Lebanon collided over She'ar Yashuv in the region of Galilee. Al 73 servicemen on board were killed. The troops were en route to the self-declared security zone just north of the Israeli border on Lebanese territory, where Israeli forces were patrolling in an effort to protect towns and villages in northern Israel against attacks staged from Palestinian and Hezbollah militants. Each year between ten and thirty Israeli soldiers were killed while on duty in the security zone, and the number of troops killed in the helicopter crash, although not on Lebanese territory, was the highest since the zone had been established in the early eighties.

It turned out to be a catalyst for grass roots activity. The incident in Galilee was reason for a group of Israeli mothers to transform their gradually growing but simmering unease about the Israeli military presence in Lebanon. They knew the lives of hundreds of Israeli sons were put at risk as a result of the military operation. Some mothers started to doubt whether the risk was worth to be taken in this particular case. Four women - Rachel Ben-Dor, Miri Sela, Ronit Nahmias and Zahara Antavi - who had sons serving in Lebanon and who lived in *kibbutzim* and towns in northern Israel, gathered at a street corner the days immediately after the incident and

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protested the Israeli military presence in Southern Lebanon. It would be the beginning of a grass roots campaign that was to gain huge support in a matter of months.

The women called for the unconditional, unilateral withdrawal of Israeli troops from Lebanon. Their quest was not easy - many people in the political establishment tried to stop or discourage them - but they finally got what they wanted. Israel pulled out its troops in May 2000, a little more than three years after the Four Mothers movement was established. The movement has been described as "one of the most successful grassroots movements in Israeli history". What was their approach and why was it so successful?

**An Unsafe Security Zone**

The activities of Four Mothers unfolded in the context of two decades of Israeli policy regarding Lebanon, which was closely linked to security issues and had both political and military dimensions. On June 6, 1982, under the direction of then Defense Minister Ariel Sharon, Israel invaded Lebanon with a massive force after for some years it had been faced with attacks from Palestinian militants operating from Lebanese territory. The massive Israeli invasion eventually drove the Palestinian forces out of Lebanon. It did not end Israeli operations in the country, however. After the first stage, Israeli troops partially withdrew from Lebanon, but did not retreat from a zone of about 15 kilometers immediately north of the Israeli-Lebanese border. This stretch of land, Israeli authorities decided was to be a security zone aimed to keep militants wishing to attack Israel at bay.

The security zone would remain in place until Israeli retreat in 2000. Despite the initial apparent defeat of Palestinian forces, tension along the Israeli-Lebanese did not cease to exist. Frequent

clashes occurred between Israeli forces and fighters of Hezbollah, the militant organization reportedly supported by Iran and Syria. As a result, Israel's security, and that of inhabitants of the northern towns, villages, and kibbutzim in particular, continued to be under threat, thus legitimizing the perpetuation of a security policy based on Israeli military presence in Lebanon. Since the invasion of Lebanon in 1982 until the Israeli withdrawal in 2000, thousands of Israeli sons were called for duty in Lebanon to protect Israel's northern border. In the mid 1990s, it became increasingly apparent to some Israeli that the security zone did not bring the safety the policy makers had hoped for. Hezbollah fighters were increasingly able to enter the zone, sometimes up to 150 meters from the Israeli border. The militants were able to stage attacks on Israeli forces that were increasingly effective from a military point of view. Gradually, the military situation changed, and not to Israel's favor. Until 1996, on average thirteen Israeli soldiers died in Lebanon per year. Since then, the annual average rose to more than twenty. While the government defended its continued military presence in Lebanon, doubts about the legitimacy and effectiveness of Israel's continuous operation in southern Lebanon seemed to be brewing. Not only among the general population but among politicians as well. But hardly any protests or even debates were openly staged. It would be the Four Mothers Movement that would bring the issue out into the open and into the limelight. The collision of the two helicopters in February 1997 was the immediate occasion for the mothers to do so.

**The First Steps**

"We were always full of concern and fear, but we felt there was no choice: we were told that they had to be in Lebanon and that's all there was to it," recalls Ronit Nahmias, whose son

served in the Golani Brigade, referring to the days she and her three friends established the Four Mothers movement.

"But the night of the helicopter disaster was a turning point for us. Families very close to us lost their sons and we realized that if not today, then tomorrow we too could lose ours. And we began to ask why?"

The government's position that the security zone was necessary to protect residents of northern Israel apparently began to ring hollow for the women as they watched Katyusha rockets rain down on nearby communities. Peter Hirschberg, a journalist, wrote in an article published in the *Jerusalem Post* in 1997:

"For years, Israelis have watched the funerals of soldiers killed in Lebanon, winced, and pushed aside their fears over their own children fighting there, convincing themselves there is no better alternative."

The rising number of body bags coming home from Lebanon increasingly induced public debate. Rachel Ben Dor, who would become chairman of the Four Mothers Movement, recalls that she met her friends shortly after the helicopter crash and spoke about the need "to do something":

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*"We had raised our sons together and had shared various periods in their lives and joys, including the beginning of their army service. We were now facing profound sorrow and despair, and also a great anxiety about their future.*

That same week the women had been reinforced in their feelings about Lebanon by an initiative of politicians, who had joined in the Kohav Yair Forum and called for a reconsideration of Israel's policy regarding Lebanon. Ben Dor:

*"Their words carried hope. It was then that I started thinking that there may be someone who wants to suppress the fact about this being a protracted and bloody war."*

Ben Dor explained she realized that many former commanders of the Lebanese war were now Knesset members and might refuse, out of a feeling of pride, to reconsider the military presence in Lebanon even if they might see reasons to do so. She also felt that

*"we must educate how to live for our country, not just to educate how to die for it"*.

The first step Ben Dor and her friends took was to send a letter of support to Knesset members from various parties who participated in the Kohav Yair Forum. "We were surprised about the prompt replies we received from most of them, in which they expressed willingness to meet us," she recalled. Partly as a result of the mothers' initiative, the subject was put on the agenda of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee of the Knesset. Subsequently, the women were invited

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to tell about their feelings and opinions in the *Hakibutz* newspaper, an article that appeared under the title "Four Mothers", which is a well-known line from a Jewish Passover song. "We decided to adopt this as our name," Ben Dor said.

**Strategic Goals**

The women quickly decided on the goal of their efforts. Increasing public awareness about the issue and putting pressure on politicians to change Israel's Lebanon policy were the Four Mothers Movement's strategic goals. The Four Mothers Movement declared it favored Israel's unilateral withdrawal from its self-declared Security Zone in southern Lebanon.

One of the first things the Four Mothers Movement did was to stage roadside protests in northern Israel, and later elsewhere in the country, to protest the Israeli military presence in Lebanon. They started to circulate petitions aimed at removing the Israeli army from Lebanon and collected over 25,000 signatures. Supporters began demonstrating across from the Defense Ministry in Tel Aviv on every day a soldier was killed in the security zone. Four Mothers also deployed activities at the Israeli-Lebanese border. The group planted a peace forest there, to symbolize the desire for peaceful borders and a return to normalcy to the area. Large demonstrations were organized in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, where speakers made pleas for a withdrawal from Lebanon.

Representatives of the Four Mothers continued to meet weekly with public officials and Knesset members. They held intensive debates with President Ezer Weizman and several Cabinet Ministers, including Benjamin Netanyahu, Israeli Prime Minister from June 1996 to June 1999, as well as over 80 of the 120 members of the Israeli parliament. At these meetings they tried to

convince officials to speak out on the issue of Lebanon and to advocate withdrawal. Members of the group also met ambassadors serving in Israel in order to inform them and seek support. They traveled abroad to raise the issue at the UN, the US State Department and at the French and British Foreign Ministries.

The Four Mothers Movement was considered to be unique in Israel. It was a truly grass roots organization, not affiliated with any party, drawing supporters from across the political spectrum. The name of the movement did not stop it from recruiting support among a variety of other groups in society. After a few months, it included women and men, students, as well as ex soldiers, some of whom had served in Lebanon. The movement swell to several hundred active members.

Four Mothers made sure it remained non-partisan. Ben For explained. "We engaged politicians from all parties, which were interested in promoting peace, and to bring this war to an end."

The movement also sought to forge ties with people across the border. Through its website, Four Mothers made efforts to contact Lebanese citizens, in particular those most directly involved in the conflict in southern Lebanon. The webmaster of the organization regularly sent e-mails to various sites of Hezbollah, but she never received an answer. She started an English version of the website, which was originally in Hebrew only, in order to "let Lebanese know about us".

Some signs of Lebanese interest were made manifest in January 2000, when the *Daily Star* English-language newspaper in Beirut published an interview it had conducted by e-mail with a spokesman for the Four Mothers Movement. Subsequently, the movement received some messages of support from Lebanese. One of the messages read

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"It is about time we have a direct dialogue and drop the lunatics of both sides."

The movement met resistance. "People from the security establishment tried to frighten us, saying we were causing damage to our own children," Nahmias recalled. A senior army official said the calls for withdrawal endangered the safety of Israeli military in Lebanon. However, the criticism and accusations didn't smother the debate. To the contrary, it incited it and made it more widespread. Meanwhile, the women received signals that many soldiers and army officers behind the scenes agreed with their position but felt they couldn't publicly express their support. In August 1998, the movement erected a "tent of protest" in front of Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's residence in Jerusalem for ten days, to collect more signatures for a petition and provide passers by with information.

**Impact**

One of the first signs that the Four Mothers' approach made an impact came on 1 April 1998, when then Prime Minister Netanyahu cited public pressure as the reason for his government to change its policy and agree to accept UN Resolution 425. This UN resolution called for the withdrawal of Israel from Lebanon, although, according to the Israeli government, this could only happen under certain conditions.

The movement's protests are also believed to have significantly contributed to a shift in public opinion in Israel. In 1997, according to a Tel Aviv University poll, 60 percent of Israeli Jews supported the government's policy to stay in Lebanon. 32 percent favored a unilateral pullout. After the Labour party of Ehud Barak won elections in 1999, it became clear that 70 percent of

the population supported the unilateral withdrawal from Lebanon. Barak had promised before the elections that he would retreat the army from Lebanon within a year. He kept his promise. Between May and July 2000, Israeli troops withdrew from the security zone.

Some observers argued that the Four Mothers movement merely reflected Israeli's growing unease about the military presence in Lebanon and simply rode that wave of content, suggesting developments would not have been any different without the Four Mothers movement being established.

The women disagree with this analysis. Ben-Zvi said:

"When we began, Lebanon was a silent war. No one talked about it. There was very little support for a withdrawal, let alone a unilateral withdrawal. We didn't just reflect public opinion, we shaped it."

Others say one of the major contributions of the group was that it pulled public debate about Lebanon out of an atmosphere of taboo. Before the Four Mothers movement came along, a Israeli University professor said, it was considered unpatriotic to discuss a possible withdrawal from Lebanon. He added he believed the women legitimized public debate about the issue.

Gadi Wolfsfeld, professor of political science and communications at Hebrew University, said the media catapulted the movement into limelight. "The Four Mothers were very active and deserve credit, but I can't separate their activity from that of the media, which raised their status enormously," he was quoted as saying in the *Jerusalem Post* after Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon. The professor also said it was a victory for democracy.

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"Their success is an important sign that people can make a difference".

In early 2000, the movement held its last meeting at Kibbutz Gadot, the location where it was conceived a little more than three years earlier, and symbolically dissolved itself. An affiliated website opened by former Four Mothers activists has it that the Four Mothers are on "Reserve Duty", implying they might reestablish activities in case developments would make that appropriate in their eyes.

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## 8. Youth: Protagonists for Peace

L. Randolph Carter and Michael Shipler*

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**While the most visible role of young people in conflict is violent, youth throughout the world are organizing in their own communities and countries in order to protect their own rights and to try to have a positive impact on their environment.**

The setting sun brought yet another gloomy night. Having eaten the meager portion of rice and soup rationed for the day, Randolph contemplated what this night would have in store for him and his family. It was late April 1996 and most of the gun and artillery fire occurred under the cover of night. The family lit kerosene lanterns and retreated indoors to what seemed to be the safest place. As he barricaded the doors, Randolph wondered if he had a future. Five months earlier, he had been a major participant in the West and Central African Regional Study of the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children (The Machel Study)1. He was a youth leader, having served as a peer mediator for a local program funded by USAID. The concerns, resoluteness and enthusiasm for peace-related programming that his peers and the participants of the study had expressed reminded this young leader that something was being done to ensure that a future did exist and that thousands of other youth were surviving similar circumstances.2

A couple of blocks away, Junior Sawyer (who was known as C.O. Dirty Ways) smoked as he watched his nine-year old prodigy clean his AK-47. Junior had joined the rebel forces in early 1990 at eleven years old as a result of the constant harassment his family had suffered at the hands of the rebels. His decision to join had brought the family no benefits as he was immediately transferred to the central part of the country to join the Small Boys Unit. Over the next five years, he had seen every major battle front in the country including the infamous "Operation Octopus" attack on the outskirts of Monrovia. This was his second battle in the

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capital area, and this time he entered the city. The major armed factional movement had temporarily stalled and Junior Sawyer and his colleagues used the time to acquire food supplies as well as gather spoils of war.

The sound of loud gunfire and shattering windows brought Randolph to his feet. His house had been attacked for reasons beyond his comprehension. The howling dogs gave every indication that death was right outside the door. Junior Sawyer and his prodigy were shooting at and chasing the young man's dogs, eventually capturing one and wounding the other. Randolph huddled with his family, crying and praying that God would save them from whatever was going on outside. After the shooting had quieted down, they listened as Junior's voice faded into the distance.

In the morning, as they cleaned up the blood, glass and bullet shells one of their dogs came in, dragging itself towards them, having suffered severe injuries. The other was nowhere to be seen. The same morning, Junior entered their yard, pale and trembling with a fever. He requested the presence of Randolph's mother; he had heard she had some medicine. "I ate some dog last night and it has made me sick. Can you please help me?" he said. Randolph was bewildered; had this guy forgotten that he had stood in this very spot, shot and killed their dog and destroyed their property the night before? As they faced each other, Randolph wondered which of these two youth was the victim of this tragedy.

These young men were both participants in the long and bloody conflict in Liberia; they both longed to have an impact on the world around them yet found themselves involved in profoundly different forces in society. This section discusses the myriad ways that youth participate in

conflicts around the world and how adult-led institutions can engage them to help them find positive ways of contributing to their societies and create viable alternatives to violence.

**Victims of War**

First, it is important to recognize that *youth-hood* is a culture-bound concept, differing from country to country. While in some societies people are "youth" until they pass a certain age, most cultures define the concept by life stage, dependent on the individuals' relationships to vocation, marriage, and parents. In situations of conflict and severe poverty, the opportunities for young people to pass through these stages are limited. War destroys family structures, eliminates access to education, and destabilizes the entire ecology of young people. Therefore, the definition of youth-hood expands and includes people well into their thirties and forties who have been unable to build the pillars of their lives. The Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children reported this phenomenon in Sierra Leone. "Because so many young people in their twenties and thirties missed out on schooling during the war and because there are so few opportunities today, many people in their thirties and forties are unskilled and unemployed, remaining youth in the eyes of society," the report on adolescents stated.3

In contrast, a *child* is internationally defined as anyone under the age of eighteen. However, many teenagers, who are still children, may also be defined as youth. As a result of the broadening of the definition of youth-hood, programming tends to focus on either young children or young adults and leaves adolescents to the side. Of course, young people of all ages directly participate in conflict.

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Like Junior and Randolph, millions of youth are victims of war. Areas affected by current armed conflicts have given rise to alarming statistics relating to HIV/AIDS, gang-related violence, prostitution, and poverty. Young people are displaced, lose their educational and vocational opportunities, and head households. All these vulnerabilities leave youth open to recruitment into armed groups where they would have a chance to participate in the conflict around them. It is paramount, therefore, to create opportunities for youth to participate in peace building and reconciliation efforts.

In many societies of conflict, youth are a large and important demographic group. For example, in Sierra Leone, the United Nations Population Division estimates that in 2005, 63.9 percent of all people will be under 25 years of age. In Colombia, 49.3 percent of the population is under 25.4 The world is getting younger and youthful generations are increasingly important to engage and support.

**Participation in Conflict**

Both Randolph and Junior, like many other young people around them, were actively engaged in the conflict raging in their country. Often, the participation of young people in conflict is negative, primarily through violence. Conservative statistics cite over 300,000 children as active soldiers in over thirty on-going wars today5. The other combatants are mostly young adults. Very little is said about the thousands of children who do not serve as full combatants but are used as couriers, messengers, and spies. The thousands of young women and girls who become sex slaves and wives of soldiers are also often ignored by programming. In less intense conflicts, youth serve as gang members and ideologues, perpetuating ethnic and political divisions in

society. Warlords and political elites have recognized the potential of young people and use this group to carry out their ideologies of war and/or politics. In Uganda, for example, the Lords Resistance Army is almost entirely made up of children. The characteristics of youth, such as a desire to have an impact on their environment, a need to belong to something bigger than themselves, susceptibility, manipulability, creativity, and resiliency, all make them potent actors in conflict.

Numerous publications cite conscription and abduction as major vehicles for youth involvement, but peer pressure and the spoils of war, coupled with belonging and acceptance, also serve as factors that pull youth into armed factions. In addition, as Junior's story shows, the desire for self and family protection prompts many to join such groups.

**Protecting Their Own Rights and Promoting Peace**

While the most visible role of young people in conflict is violent, youth throughout the world are organizing in their own communities and countries in order to protect their own rights and to try to have a positive impact on their environment. In Cambodia, for example, a group of four young genocide survivors, led by Outh Renne, created an organization called Youth for Peace (YFP). Their work began under a tree and has primarily focused on helping the younger generation take on a leadership role in reconstructing the country and building a lasting peace based on a renewed traditional culture. Through a series of partnerships with adult-led organizations, YFP has built a solid foundation; they now have a youth center in Phnom Penh and are working throughout the country, even in the Khmer Rouge regions in the North.

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In zones of conflict all over the world, youth are coming together, seeking to protect their own rights and to promote peace. Most such groups never formalize their organizations or receive funding from international sources. They exist for a brief time and give young people meaning during crises. Others, like Youth for Peace and the Burundian organization, JAMAA (which is portrayed in the section), link with powerful partners in civil society or with international organizations to build their capacity and to help them gain access to resources. These groups are on the front lines; their work results directly from the conflicts that affect their lives and takes place in spaces in society that no adult-led group can access. They are able to build relationships with those young people who are involved in violence and help them find ways of engaging constructively.

Because of his work with the Student Palava Managers, a network of youth mediators, Randolph could open himself up to Junior, and they began to talk as the soldier waited for his medication. Over a three month period, a profound friendship developed between the two. Randolph learned and listened to episodes of Junior's involvement in the war, his dreams of becoming an ambassador, and his fear of survival without his weapon. Junior listened to Randolph's struggles during the war, his dream of also becoming an ambassador one day, his involvement with the peer mediation and counseling, and his interactions with individuals who were genuinely concerned about their plight as young people. Over time, this friendship prompted Junior to cut his long, unkempt hair (to which he attributed his wartime protection). He switched from his alias to his real name, refused to take his daily ration of drugs that he had been given in order to control him, and left his AK-47 permanently under his bed. This informal interaction had led a young man away from violence and opened up possibilities for him that had not seemed to be

there. Threatened by the positive fruits of this interaction, leaders of Junior's rebel group warned that there would drastic action against Randolph's entire family if there was further contact between the young men. Junior was forcibly reenlisted and was last seen tied in the back of a military truck *enroute* to another county.

**Creating Alternatives to Violence**

Youth-led organizations in zones of conflict are often well placed to facilitate such interactions that help create viable alternatives to violence. Throughout the world, adult-led groups have begun to recognize the importance of including young people in the leadership of projects that target adolescents and young adults. The rise of *youth participation* as a technical field has produced a series of initiatives that are designed and run with the significant input of young people. UNICEF defines participation as "involving young people as active participants in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of sustainable, community-based initiatives."6 In the field of HIV/AIDS prevention, young people have been at the forefront of programming, helping to design and implement curriculums aimed at educating their peers in the dangers of the illness. Community-development initiatives, youth media, and other program streams have fully incorporated participation into their methodology.

More importantly, young leaders have begun to be included in national and international level dialogues on issues that involve them. Children who had been directly affected by conflict were featured prominently at the International Conference on War-Affected Children in Winnipeg, Canada, the Special Session on Children at the United Nations, and the US Department of Labor Conference, Children in the Crossfire. These attempts at bringing young people into policy

discussions have not only honored their experiences and perspectives but have shown that their ideas have value in discussions that are often beyond their reach.

Additionally, the Women's Commission on Refugee Women and Children produced a series of reports on the challenges facing adolescents in Kosovo, Sierra Leone, and Northern Uganda that were researched by young people and reflected their own perspectives. The reports, which were widely disseminated, have created a consciousness that youth not only understand their own situations but that they should be consulted when determining appropriate interventions on their behalf.

In addition to the vast and important participation work of the international community, a global youth movement is seeking to create opportunities for young people to take a lead in political arenas. Numerous local, national and international networks of young leaders have sprung up, forming youth councils and attempting to influence policy decision making on issues that affect them. However there has been very little engagement by the international community with such groups.

**Facilitating the Participation of Youth**

Because certain sectors of youth play a significant role in conflict, it is important not only to forge space for young people in programming but to facilitate their participation in society as a whole so that they can directly contribute to the transformation of their country's conflict. Already, youth-led organizations throughout the world are leading this shift in the notion of participation. JAMAA of Burundi, for example, formed as an association of young people who had been manipulated into violence by political elites. In order to protect themselves and their

peers, they created a series of comprehensive activities through which they could engage society in a constructive way, breaking down barriers between Hutus and Tutsis, facilitating dialogue on inter-ethnic relations, and seeking to reintegrate children who had been involved with fighting forces on both sides.

Youth-led organizations have recognized the importance of engaging youth as participants in society and are leading an ad hoc movement that is seeking to generate opportunities for youth groups to participate in processes that build bridges and promote long-term sustainable peace. In some environments, they are addressing the root causes of youth vulnerabilities including unemployment, inadequate or irrelevant education, the disruption of family and social structures, and alienation from mainstream society.

Peace building organizations, such as Search for Common Ground, have recognized that youth are key actors in conflict and need to be engaged as stakeholders who are needed to ensure success in promoting peace on a societal level. Adult-led organizations, by engaging with youth who are directly involved or at-risk of being involved in violence, can help to transform young people's impact on conflict so that they are contributing to dialogue and long-term peace.

**Lessons Learned**

This engagement, whether happening on a community, national, or international level is not without its challenges. While seeking to address the issues surrounding youth in conflict situations on the ground, there are a number of lessons that might be useful:

. *Work with youth-led organizations* – It is important for international, adult-led institutions to engage youth directly, in the ways that they already organize. Rather than trying to create

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structures of young people, it is important to work with existing youth-led organizations, including those that are not traditional (i.e., gangs).

. *Create a five degree shift* – Successful programs seek to cause a *five degree shift* (rather than a 180 degree turnaround) in young people who are involved in organized violence by directing their existing energies and skills into positive and constructive projects. Gang members who deal drugs, for example, are often entrepreneurial and charismatic, with leadership, management and marketing skills. All those attributes can be harnessed to promote peace.

. *Dedicate resources to youth groups* – It is important to help youth organizations gain the resources necessary to operate. Financial and technical support should be granted to them so that they can effectively deliver quality programming.

. *Create adult-youth partnerships* – The most successful youth groups have adults, particularly those in civil-society organizations, as partners. This enables people with more experience to mentor and guide young people in developing their institutional structure and programming. A number of initiatives have sought to create such links and partnerships; the Mennonite Central Committee and the American Friends Service Committee played key roles in supporting the establishment of Youth for Peace in Cambodia. The Christian Health Services were instrumental in supporting the Student Palava Managers in Liberia.

. *Link youth groups together* – Youth groups benefit from being linked together both nationally and internationally so that they are able to coordinate efforts, liaise with international policy makers and learn from one another's creativity.

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While considered extremely important to work with youth within their countries, young people have perspectives and approaches that can enrich **international policy** toward them. Lessons learned in this arena include:

. *Ensure quality representation* – Rather than simply identifying an "ex-child soldier," organizers should seek to bring youth participants that have connections to their peers. Including young peacebuilders who are involved in the reconstruction process is crucial.

. *Foster genuine participation* – Unlike token participation that has the propensity to involve youth as justifications for grants and collateral for future funding, the inclusion of youth should be genuine. The engagement should be aimed at strengthening dialogue and policies and should result from a series of community-level consultations geared at ensuring that local efforts and challenges are addressed nationally and internationally.

. *Harness positive energy* – Youth involved at this level of participation usually have scores of other young people who anxiously wait to hear about the experience. Seeing their peers meet and interact with prominent figure, who are usually seen as inaccessible, generates a desire to work harder.

. *Ensure proper follow-up* – It is very challenging for young people to go from being a conference superstar and the inspiration to many, to not hearing from their "admirers" ever again. Dozens of youth are taken each year from remote villages and war torn countries and are flown to lavish hotels and conference settings. Going home is not initially difficult as they have scores of their peers eager to hear about their experiences. Participants usually feel that the people there were all so nice and concerned about what they are going through. While this

generates an air of positivism, proper follow-up is essential to the long-term welfare of youth and effective policy-level participation.

**Monumental Challenges**

The direct engagement with youth-led groups allows the international community to develop programming that directly addresses the issues that young people are facing in addition to helping to transform the role of youth within the conflict. By strengthening youth groups' involvement in positive activities, young people have representatives in society, acting as outlets for the frustrations of a generation.

The dramatic increase in youth populations in many countries throughout the world has finally brought attention to the issues faced by young people in situations of conflict. As a significant demographic in most nations, youth have a powerful impact on how a society unfolds; they have economic and educational needs that governments are often ill-equipped to handle. Globally, youth face obstacles to gaining employment and access to relevant education and they are often marginalized from political and economic power. Representatives of the generation organize to create opportunities to be engaged in society, including those that have destructive ends. The international community, including donors, NGOs and multilateral organizations, is seeking out ways of grappling with the monumental challenges that face young people. Major initiatives to increase youth employment and to reform education systems are underway throughout the world. However, by themselves, all these efforts cannot bring the participation of youth in violence to an end.

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Additional efforts to specifically strengthen the role of youth in conflict situations at a societal level are needed. Young people, if engaged as relevant stakeholders alongside militaries, political elites, women, and governments, can significantly contribute to security and economic development. Those youth who are organizing and mobilizing their generation to play a positive role, build bridges across ethnic and political lines and are seeking to protect their peers, need additional support to be propelled into leadership roles. Through their engagement, key young leaders can play a role in promoting peace within their societies and are positioned to create viable alternatives for their peers so that they can avoid involvement in violence.

** L. Randolph Carter currently serves as Assistant US - Resource Coordinator for the National Association of Palava Managers(based in Liberia). Having experienced firsthand the devastation of war and civil unrest, Randolph has dedicated nearly fourteen years to the advocacy of Children Affected by Armed Conflict.*

*Michael Shipler is the Coordinator of Children and Youth Programs for Search for Common Ground. He has been working with children and youth affected by armed conflict for seven years developing a range of programs aimed at transforming the role of young people in conflicts.*

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General of the United Nations. August 1996. www.unicef.org/graca/

[2] The Randolph referred to here is L Randolph Carter, one of the co-authors of this chapter.

[3] *Precious Resources; Adolescents in the Reconstruction of Sierra Leone*. New York, NY, USA. September 2002. Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children. www.womenscommission.org

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[6] *Adolescent Participation in Programme Activities During Situations of Conflict and Post-Conflict*. New York, NY, USA. January 2004. UNICEF Office of Emergency Programmes.

**Resources**

**Lead organizations**

Global Movement for Children – United Kingdom

info@gmfc.org

http://www.gmfc.org

Global Youth Action Network – USA

gyan@youthlink.org

http://www.youthlink.org

Institute for International Mediation and Conflict Resolution – USA

info@iimcr.org

http://www.iimcr.org

International Youth Foundation – USA

youth@iyfnet.org

http://www.iyfnet.org

Oxfam International Youth Parliament – Australia

Peacebuilding Action Area

info@iyp.oxfam.org

http://www.iyp.oxfam.org

Search for Common Ground – USA

Children and Youth Programme

search@sfcg.org

http://www.sfcg.org/programmes/children/programmes_children.html

UNICEF – USA

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Voices of Youth

For contact, please visit website

http://www.unicef.org/voy

United Network of Young Peacebuilders – The Netherlands

info@unoy.org

http://www.unoy.org

**Additional websites**

http://www.essex.ac.uk/armedcon/themes/general/default.htm

Portal on children and armed conflict

http://www.coe.int/youth

Council of Europe: peace and intercultural dialogue sector

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Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children. Untapped potential: Adolescents affected by armed conflict. A review of programs and policies. New York: 2000 http://www.asylumsupport.info/publications/womenscommssion/potential.pdf

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## 8.1 Picking up the Pieces: Jamaa in Burundi

***"I was in the middle," recalls Adrien Tuyaga. "Each side wanted me to join them and participate in the violence. I thought I would be killing my mother if I joined the Hutus and betraying my father if I joined the Tutsis. This is how I started to think of ways to pull people together."1 Tuyaga's answer was Jamaa, a Burundian youth organization that promotes peace and reconciliation between Hutu and Tutsi youths.***

The story of Tuyaga's and Jamaa's success is an unlikely story. Adrien Tuyaga was born in 1966 to a Tutsi mother and a Hutu father. When he was six, his father was killed during a massacre of Hutus by the Tutsi minority. Later, he was a boxer — and a drug addict. Then, in 1993, Melchior Ndadaye was assassinated, three months after he took office as Burundi's first democratically elected Hutu president. A wave of ethnic killings began that eventually claimed an estimated 300,000 lives.

The ethnic fighting led to the sharp division of Burundi into Hutu and Tutsi zones, without any contact between the communities. The youth on both sides often took a leading role in committing acts of violence. It hardly seemed to matter to them that they were fighting their former friends, neighbors and even relatives. Attempts by the government and initiatives by some local NGOs to bring together the warring militias to try to negotiate an end to the violence were futile.

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**<Box>**

**A crowded country with a legacy of ethnic conflict**

Burundi, a small country in the Great Lakes region in Central Africa, is often called " the heart of Africa". With 6.8 million inhabitants living on just 27,816 square kilometers, it is the second most densely populated country on the African continent.

Ethnically, Burundi is divided between Hutus, who comprise more than 85 percent of the total population, and Tutsis comprising around 14 percent. From independence in 1962 until 1993, Tutsis controlled the army and the government. On several occasions, the Hutu majority attempted to wrest power from the Tutsis. Since 1993, violence and civil conflict have persisted, and with the violence, political instability has prevailed. In 2000, former South African President Nelson Mandela brokered a ceasefire and a power-sharing agreement, but periodic outbreaks of fighting continue to afflict Burundi. A second South African-brokered power-sharing deal was signed at the end of 2002, but to date, peace has eluded Burundi.

**<End box>**

**An Alternative to Violence**

It was around this time that Adrien Tuyaga began to talk to his close friend and neighbor Abdoul Niyungeko about the violence. Niyungeko was a Hutu, married to a Tutsi. The two men could not understand how former friends and neighbors could be filled with so much hate and driven to such horrific acts of violence. They decided to approach young people, and especially youth leaders, and try to convince them to turn away from violence and join a movement for peace and reconciliation. "I targeted the youth leaders because they could start or stop the violence," says Tuyaga.

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That movement became Jamaa — *friends* in Swahili, which they founded in 1994. Jamaa was established with the understanding that it was necessary to persuade the youth on both sides who had themselves been involved in killings to sit down together and talk of reconciliation. Tuyaga and Niyungeko, who later was tragically killed in a motorcycle accident in 1997, told the youth leaders that society would forgive them for what they had done in the past if they took positive actions to build a peaceful society.

There were enormous risks, but something needed to be done to reintegrate these youths — many of whom had killed during the violence of the previous year — back into society, and to find a way to achieve justice and reconciliation in and between their communities.

**The Jamaa Record**

The very first activity was a football match organized between Tutsi and Hutu youths in Bujumbura, the capital. Subsequently, Jamaa organized a retreat with more than eighty leaders of youth militias from Bujumbura, as well as the suburbs and rural areas. The participants exchanged views on what was happening, why and how they might stop the violence, and what would be the implications on the leaders of their respective groups if they did take steps to end the violence.

There was no guarantee that the meeting would succeed, or even that it might not end in precisely the sort of violence it was aimed to stop. Many of these youths could not have imagined the possibility of even sitting together, much less discussing a complete change in their attitudes towards each other. The violence was so ingrained that they could look at their own

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deeds with a remarkable degree of detachment, as if killing and maiming the "other" was a most ordinary activity.

But nonetheless, perhaps surprisingly, the youths broke through an important barrier at that first gathering, and at the end of the retreat, they pledged to turn away from violence. After making this pledge, they played a football match with mixed teams whose members included former killers from the two ethnic groups playing together. The match was greeted with great enthusiasm by those who were watching.

The activity helped to break down the fear and suspicion that had grown up between the two communities, and slowly confidence and trust was built up and the security situation improved. Encouraged by the agreement among the youth leaders, and the success of the football match, Jamaa organized a whole tournament with mixed teams competing, and organized activities outside the capital.

Following the success with the football matches, the first stage of Jamaa's "real" work began with trauma counseling. That involved talking to the youth about their experiences of violence, accompanied by efforts to re-integrate them back into the community. One former Hutu militia member, for example, admitted his complicity in the killings, explaining that "I reacted from fear, and I was confused. I was made to feel that if I didn't kill the Tutsis they would kill me." Jamaa worked with international NGOs to develop employment opportunities for the youth. They arranged microcredit facilities, with the condition that credit would only be available to applicants whose proposals clearly included a multi-ethnic component.2

In 1999, Jamaa made another move to forge relationships between the youth groups as a way to head off threats of violence. This initiative was called *Jamaa, Gardons Contact*, which means:

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"Friends, let's keep in touch". The idea was that regular contact between youth groups was important, if the previous work of reconciliation was to be kept alive. The organization built up a network of ex-militia leaders and youth-at-risk who could get in touch with each other precisely at the moments when violence appeared likely.

Still another Jamaa initiative proved its value around the time of the signing of the Arusha Accords to put an end to the conflict in August 2000. Violence was increasing in Bujumbura as extremists tried to undermine the talks. Jamaa launched a campaign in the city under the slogan *Yes to Life, No to Violence.* They plastered the city with posters, hung banners, and distributed leaflets calling on local people to join them in rejecting violence and asking them to wear a piece of white cloth around their wrists as a symbolic gesture of their choice for peace. A more serious outbreak of violence failed to materialize.

The following year, in collaboration with the NGO Search for Common Ground, Jamaa published a cartoon book called *Le Meilleur Choix* (The Best Choice). The book used drama and humor to depict the real-life experiences of two young men who had taken part in the ethnic violence and who were attempting to reconcile with the families of their victims. The Ministry of Education in Burundi has now included the book as a formal part of the national curriculum for peace education in schools and colleges throughout the country.

Also in 2001, Search for Common Ground called on Jamaa to mobilize 32 youth leaders associated with *Gardons Contact* when it appeared that a new wave of violence might erupt. The youth came together and assisted with emergency food distribution to 50,000 people displaced by fighting between government troops and rebels. The action was enormously helpful in a

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practical sense, and also was of great symbolic importance as a demonstration of the commitment of the youth to peace and reconciliation.

**Strategies, Priorities, Challenges**

Jamaa's strategy is to focus on a variety of issues that must be addressed if peace and stability are to prevail. One of the most important of these is the pressing need to expand educational opportunities that give young people a foundation upon which they can build productive lives. Jamaa is also an advocate for the development of public infrastructure, where the net effect is not only to stimulate economic development and activity, but also to increase interdependency among Burundi's communities. A further strategic focus of Jamaa is to address the difficulties of young Burundians regarding access to land, housing and employment. Finally, Jamaa actively promotes justice and human rights

Jamaa's priority today is to work in solidarity with local communities during this sensitive transition period in Burundi. But finding the resources to sustain its programs continues to be a major challenge. Although Jamaa has received local and international recognition for its contributions to peacebuilding within Burundi's still-divided communities, and its *Le Meilleur Choix* was a finalist for the 2003 UNESCO Prize for Children's and Young People's Literature in the Service of Tolerance, its long-term survival can only be assured with support from outside sources.

**Looking Back**

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In ten years of activities, Jamaa has learned a number of valuable lessons. To begin with, the first step to resolving a conflict is to step back from all forms of confrontation, and then to take care not to marginalize any player. Inclusiveness is essential; all actors should be given an opportunity to be involved. The corollary lesson is that there are neither "big" nor "small" actors — each actor must be given his or her due. When engaged in discussion and debate, Jamaa has learned, all arguments must be presented openly and frankly, and respectfully listened to by all the partners. Finally, it is important to be flexible. There is one absolute — respect for the human rights of all, regardless of ethnicity — but many strategies, including ones drawing on local cultures and strategies specific to local contexts, which can be applied to encourage dialogue and reconciliation on the ground.

Jamaa began with a football game, but has grown into a valuable tool for reconciliation. It owes a large part of its success to an understanding that while young people may have participated in ethnic violence, the real perpetrators were politicians who manipulated impressionable youth for their own purposes. As one former Tutsi militia member stated, "I didn't profit from any of the killings. I was poor before and I am poor now. The politicians told us to kill and now we have to pick up the pieces." Thanks to Jamaa, picking up the pieces is a little bit easier.

**Contact**

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[1] Dr. Scilla Elworthy, *Gandhi's Legacy: the vibrancy of non-violent conflict resolution in the 21st Century*

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## 8.2 And a Child shall Lead: Children's Movement for Peace/Return to Happiness in Colombia

***With a bold gesture that captured the national imagination, Colombian children pointed the way towards peaceful resolution of South America's longest-running civil war. Other young people are trying to keep that spirit alive.***

Graça Machel, wife of former South African president Nelson Mandela, was visiting towns and villages affected by violence in Colombia when she planted the idea of holding a national exercise in which children would vote on their rights as citizens. The year was 1996. Against the backdrop of a long-running civil war, national elections were approaching in which adults would have their say. The idea of a children's vote quickly took on a life of its own.

Under auspices of UNICEF, sponsors of Ms. Machel's visit to Colombia, a children's vote was held successfully in her native country, Mozambique. It was later replicated in Ecuador, in 1993. UNICEF organized a workshop to discuss the possibility of holding a national children's referendum in Colombia. Almost thirty young people between ages 7-16 from all over the country and all walks of life turned up; it attracted adult organizations as well.

For many of these participants, it was an eye-opening experience. They found themselves sharing common experiences with people from other areas of the country and were able to develop joint approaches. Young people also discovered something important: when children talk about violence, adults tend to listen.

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**Referendum**

This planning workshop became a springboard for a national organization, *Movimiento de los Niños por La Paz* (Children's Movement for Peace), which made history by organizing a referendum to determine the rights valued most by children.

In a country where children were normally helpless victims of violence, the Children's Movement for Peace provided a medium through which many youngsters felt empowered to take their own initiatives.

Mayerly Sanchez, a young spokesperson for the Children's Movement for Peace, says that for her the turning was the stabbing of a young next-door neighbor during a gang fight. This happened a few blocks from home. She pledged to take action against violence and found in the Movement an appropriate outlet for her energies.

With help from adult bodies, the Children's Movement set about organizing the vote.1 The arrangement of voting was localized, down to neighborhoods, schools and communities. Over a four-month period, support alliances were set up across the country. As the organization grew, the initial mass media skepticism gave way to enthusiasm. Important media outlets interviewed the children and offered airtime for commercials.

For the first time, many Colombians saw and heard children - many of them quite articulate - talk with sincerity about their own aspirations for peace. They listened to them recount experiences with violence. The depth of these feelings took many by surprise, and helped foster a favorable national mood. Community organizations, churches, schools and municipalities signed on to participate in the referendum.

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As its reach expanded, the ministries of Education and Interior provided support. Guerrillas and government troops pledged not to disrupt this unique exercise in democracy. Crucially - given the costs involved - the government accepted its constitutional obligation to facilitate participatory democracy and underwrite the cost of staging the nationwide vote.

The turnout on voting day, October 25, 1996, was overwhelming; the outcome was decisive: 2.7 million children voters rejected violence and chose the right to life and peace. "Peace," said one of the child voters, "is most important because without it you cannot have any other right."

This result, the effort put into organizing the event, and the spirit and mood stimulated across the country by the process, influenced parallel peace movements and initiatives that embraced politicians, civil society, and the public at large. In an important indication of support, the government decreed that henceforth the military draft for youths under the age of 18 would be voluntary.

**Adult Equivalent**

One year later, an adult equivalent of the children's vote was organized. In the largest social mobilization ever undertaken in Colombia, ten million adult voters voted "Yes" for a Citizen's Mandate for Peace, Life and Freedom. Although this vote was marred by violent incidents and threats of disruptions, and criticized by some as "unworkable", "divisive", and "too dangerous", election day was relatively calm. Voter turnout was 40 percent higher than in normal electoral elections.

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The positive outcome of these two voting exercises provided renewed focus for what was, at the time, a largely fragmented and weak peace movement. The idealism and sincerity of the children had made a difference. They had demonstrated to adults that large-scale mobilization was possible around an issue like peace.

This heightened awareness may have influenced representatives of the main guerrilla groups to travel to Germany for exploratory talks with representatives of civil society, religious groups, and government leaders, five weeks after the presidential elections of May 1998.

After the heady aftermath of the vote, the Children's Movement for Peace became involved in other activities and became a forum for airing children's opinions on subjects of concern. It set up youth support groups to deal with issues such as street violence and adolescent drug use, mediated in gang wars and helped children traumatized by violence. The group also hosted a Summit for Children.

**Return to Happiness**

Mayerly Sanchez says the children's organization defines peace in four words: "love", "acceptance", "forgiveness" and "work" - watchwords which are also present, in one form or another, in *Retorno de la Alegria* (Return to Happiness) initiative.

The Return to Happiness program emerged in 1996, during the hopeful period that spawned Children's Movement for Peace. Using a model also tried by UNICEF in Mozambique - an African country that has found peace after a long, intense civil war - Return to Happiness trains adolescent volunteers, supervised by teachers, to give therapeutic support and encourage trust

and hope among young children. It uses games, art, puppetry, songs and story telling as tools of therapy.

Some 500 volunteers were initially trained within the space of a month. They were taught how to recognize symptoms of stress in children, and observe and communicate with them. Every available space has been utilized as meeting areas - churches, parks, and kiosks. Using toys and puppets as characters to tell stories that fit the culture of the audience, the volunteers foster personal relationships and create safe environments in which children express feelings and begin to overcome painful conflict experiences.

Volunteers are armed with what was called a "knapsack of dreams" – rag dolls, puppets, wooden toys and books. Each of these tools served a specific function. The dolls, for example, symbolized characters in the child's life, and could unlock memories and fears. Puppets helped volunteers bring stories to life. The books (*El Miquito Feliz* – The Happy Little Monkey and *Buenas Noches* - Good Night) were useful to overcome stress-related problems, sleeplessness and fears.

All toys, puppets and learning materials are locally produced to generate income for the community. The program addresses areas like psychosocial recovery, education for peace and social mobilization; reconciliation, conflict resolution, health education and the rebuilding and reconstruction of the community.

"From the start," said UNICEF in a background document on the program, "adolescents proved an ideal role model for the younger children. Adolescents understand very well the child's world – the games, songs, stories, riddles and legends. In the towns and villages of Colombia they feel

the same impact of terror and violence. They console and support each other as the volunteers attempted to bring back a sense of normalcy to the lives of younger children."

In the course of teaching others to overcome distress, the adolescent volunteers also learn to cope and the ability to help others builds their own self-esteem. Specialized support and self-help are integrated into the program to help them sort out personal problems.

Community-based participation is encouraged rather than the standard, clinical model of psychological therapy. Individual children, for example, are given attention and enabled to relate to others in a wider group, and in an environment that inspired confidence. Children with symptoms of trauma are helped in afternoon activities. These are conducted in familiar environment. Where necessary, special treatment and support are provided through appropriate mental health services, including counseling and rehabilitation for the severely traumatized. Inside schools located in violence-prone regions, volunteers work to improve relationships between teachers and students, and among the children themselves. They also do what they can to strengthen partnerships among non-governmental organizations, religious groups, school officials, local government officials, health officials and young people. This helps raise community awareness of psychosocial issues and strengthens support for mental health services. In the Panamanian province of Darien - an isolated, sparsely populated and dangerous place just across the border from Colombia, into which refugees frequently flee – a UNICEF staff member, posted there full-time in 1992, started a Return to Happiness therapy program as a focal point for mobilizing the community and establishing links between various groups and organizations. UNICEF is pleased with the results,

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"Although there is continued risk of violence in the refugee communities, the Return to Happiness program has contributed to a sense of security and brought new life to the children. The children have been trained to use the symbol of the human hand to represent the commitment to protect children from harm. Each finger of the hand is raised in protection and identified with a particular quality associated with peace."

UNICEF reports that the real value of Return to Happiness is its over-arching impact. The program affects children's health and well being at home, in schools and in the community; it helps both individuals and the wider community.

**Examples to Combatants**

These two programs involving Colombian young people certainly have not ended violence and bloodshed; nonetheless, they provide examples to combatants of the existence of a national sentiment in favor of peace. The depth of their reach may well have deprived guerrilla armies and paramilitary groups of potential recruits among the young population.

*Movimiento de los Niños por La Paz* (Children's Movement for Peace) has encouraged millions of young Colombians to think and act in the interest of peace, among themselves, and by influencing the adult population in this direction. *Retorno de la Alegria* (Return to Happiness) with its combination of psychological support and community-based actions for peace, builds on

this foundation to support refugee victims of violence and terror and create a more peaceful environment for children.

**Contact**

Moviento de los Niños por la Paz

e-mail: movipaz@hotmail.com

**Resources**

*True Stories* – Children's Movement for Peace

*Adolescent Participation in Programme Activities during Situations of Conflict and Post-Conflict.* Office of Emergency Programmes, UNICEF, January 2004

**Note**

[1] Support came from World Vision, Colombian Scouts, Colombian Red Cross, Benposta, Children's Defense International, the Public Defenders Office, Jesuits Program for Peace, Save the Children Fund, Christian Children's Fund, Unesco, the diplomatic community, local government agencies, schools, community and religious organizations working with children and displaced populations, and UNICEF.

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## 8.3 Young Kosovars Help Themselves: Kosovo Youth Council Kosovo

***Rather than feeling sorry for themselves, young people displaced by the war in Kosovo organized themselves to improve their own situation. The group was effective in getting youth issues onto the agendas of the (international) decision makers.*** By Valon Kurhasani*

During the late 1990s, the republic of Kosovo stood at the center of the series of upheavals that marked the break-up of former Yugoslavia. The majority ethnic Albanian population pressed demands for independence; the Serb minority opposed this. With the Kosovo Liberation Army stepping up attacks, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia government in Belgrade responded with force.

When peace initiatives failed, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) carried out an intense bombing campaign in early 1999 to force Serbian troops out of the territory. The events leading up to this war, the war itself, and its aftermath, demanded an immense human toll.

A week after the bombings began in 1999, more than 300,000 ethnically Albanian Kosovars fled into neighboring Albania and Macedonia. Roughly the same number was displaced within the province itself. Overall, some 850,000 people - the vast majority of them of Albanian ethnicity - fled their homes. Thousands died or went missing. Hundreds were imprisoned. Land mines and unexploded ordinance littered the countryside. Many people, traumatized by the conflict, had no clear vision of the future.

The possibilities for reconstruction and reconciliation of the republic in the aftermath of the war was made more complicated by the relatively young age of the Kosovar population,

approximately half of whom were under 20 years of age. Reports by the World Bank and European Union, presented at a conference in Brussels in 1999, identified young people between the ages of 15-20, as the greatest potential source of civil unrest in Kosovo.

It was against this background that a youth organization called Kosovar Youth Council (KYC) was stepped up to speak for this huge part of Kosovar Society. Its aim was to help young Kosovars overcome the trauma and hardships brought on by this massive expulsion and help them build a new future. .

**Make a Better Place for a Better Life**

KYC came into being when, in the aftermath of the war, the Albanian Youth Council helped mobilize and organize Kosovar youths, both in refugee camps and in towns. Some 20,000 of these youths, in six Albanian refugee camps, got together and formed their own youth councils to improve conditions in these camps by organizing sports and music events, improving safety and cleanliness, distributing landmine-awareness information, and providing psycho-social counseling for younger children.

Many continued their community development work when they were repatriated to their home villages and maintained a youth network that promoted local peacebuilding efforts. These efforts sometimes even stretched across ethnic lines, a rare thing in those days. The councils functioned as outlets for youth voices. The young activists were valuable for the reconstruction of Kosovo, because they promoted issues, like self-organized education, developed entertainment for other young people, and became actively involved in the creation and development of meaningful youth policies.

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With its "Make a better place for a better life", KYC set about playing an advisory and leadership coordinating role, including, among other things, researching the problems and needs of young people in Kosovo. It broadened its initiatives over time, to include more comprehensive efforts aimed at supporting civil society, such as encouraging youth participation by creating youth NGOs and coordinating their leadership.

**Battle for Peace**

The KYC became one of the first organizations of young people to push its way onto the radar screens of international bodies and nowadays could be seen as a model of how international agencies can engage with youth groups in post-conflict situations. It was effective in getting youth issues onto the agendas of decision makers of all levels that were involved in Kosovo, a necessity in a country where almost half of the population constitutes youth.

One reason for its success was that it embraced different ethnic groups, and therefore was viewed as neutral. This helped the group focus on issues concerning young people without regard for their ethnic background.

Children, adolescents and young adults were particularly exposed to problems caused by the conflict. Many young people in Kosovo lacked confidence and a feeling of self-worth and had very little hope for the future. With social, educational and economic networks for young people in disarray because of the conflict, young people needed help to find appropriate responses to their situation. Without it, many agreed, the future well-being of the area was in danger.

Reports on the difficulties that young people were facing were plenty, on issues like girls and young women being kidnapped, youths drug abuse and violence against minorities; about young

people losing their parents and being unable to get proper education opportunities. All these things pointed to the need to know more about the nature and breadth of problems facing youth and what it takes to solve them.

With its multi-ethnic membership - mainly adolescents, while others were in their twenties – KYC became one of the few organizations serving as an advocacy groups on behalf of young Kosovars. Today, KYC has sixty active members operating in several cities, including Pristina, Pejë and Gjakova, with a main office in Pristina.

One of its most important projects was a research project that provided an overview of the problems facing young people and how they could be resolved. The research found that while many young people appeared to be recovering reasonably well from the war, equally many though faced personal crises. In general, according to the research, the situation of all young people required urgent attention to prevent it from getting worse.

Some young people were still carrying weapons, the researchers discovered. Economic and social pressures had led to some stopping normal education. In some instances, this was because of family pressure - especially in the case of rural girls. There was also lack of motivation and desire. Many young people had no home. Others suffered in isolation, without a support network. This was especially so in the case of girls who had suffered sexual violence. Most could not speak openly about love relationships, for example. The researchers concluded that the capacity of young people to function as constructive civil society actors needed to be developed and they should be included in decision making processes affecting Kosovar society.

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*"Can we live with Serbs?", an Albanian Kosovar adolescent asked during a discussion at which young Kosovar refugees contemplated their return to Kosovo. "Never!" she answered herself. Another countered: "But some of them helped us get to safety." A third said, "No, no, you can't trust any of them."1*

*"Never can we live together with Albanians," said a Serbian adolescent girl after she was asked about the possibility of living in a multi-ethnic society in Kosovo.*

*Another said, 'Why not? We were friends before. We could be friends again."*

*In a separate discussion, one Albanian girl commented, "They killed and raped us; how can we live with them?" Another said, "It is difficult now, but perhaps for future generations, yes, if it happens, it will be the youth who will make it possible."2*

**Finding Solutions**

The KYC research project revealed that international and local actors had failed to adequately consult Kosovo's youth and equally failed include them in the decision making processes. Young people had also been excluded from reconstruction and development initiatives, and were being left out of mainstream programming interventions aimed at the young. The failure to include the young people – and with that almost have of its population – and to seriously address youth issues meant that the group felt increasingly isolated and almost useless. It resulted not only in rights violations committed against, but increasingly by, young people, who felt left out and provided a legacy of conflict for future generations.

One of the concrete actions undertaken by KYC was an initiative to work with the Women's Commission on a project to mobilize adolescents and carry out research into the nature of

problems faced by young people, and finding solutions to those problems. It also got young people to speak publicly about their concerns and try to effect change.

KYC joined other actors to offer adolescents and young adults alternatives to violence by promoting respect for the rule of law, and encouraging them to deal with leadership that contribute to their healing and provide a new path to the future for Kosovo as a whole. It was acknowledged that many young people worked hard to care for themselves and their families and engage in activities to support the recovery of their communities.

The participatory nature of the research program led to further youth–initiated and community–based action and confirmed that with support and encouragement, young people could accomplish great things. Significantly, Albanians and Serbs were not required to interact with one another while conducting the research. This was mainly because of security concerns: children and adolescents were at risk if they participated in inter-ethnic activities.

In 2002, KYC conducted a project called "Strengthening youth advocacy in Kosova" aimed at providing help to young people to connect with one another and formulate key issues for advocacy and action to address continuing challenges. Such links crossed gender, rural/urban and ethnic lines. The aim was to help youngsters view issues facing them, and their experiences, as being of relevance not only for their own communities but for society as a whole, and to get them to see the larger picture in which policy, programs and decision making took place.

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The activities also helped to place young people's concerns at the center of the many challenges facing Kosovo. It was finally accepted that concern and action on the issues young people were facing was important for the future stability of the province, and prevention of further rights abuses.

KYC also provided concrete opportunities for young people to become further involved in youth advocacy in Kosovo. Small teams were established in areas with minority populations and KYC members got directly in touch with youths from minorities wherever they were accessible. When this was not feasible, KYC worked jointly with international organizations to reach minority areas and provided them with the same level of training provided to other teams. They were also invited to participate in seminars. By having young people address concerns of their peers from all ethnic backgrounds, links were established and young people exposed to new ways of understanding each other problems.

During the first two months of the project, KYC brought together young people from several ethnic groups, resulting in young Albanians entering Serb enclaves in Rahavec, without escort, to work with their Serb peers, for the first time.

The regions that experienced no clashes during the outbreak of violence on March 17$^{th}$ and 18$^{th}$, 2004, were those where KYC and other local and international partners worked with all ethnic communities.

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**More Tolerant**

Although the climate in Kosovo remains very difficult, the inter-ethnic interaction among youth fostered by conflict resolution and tolerance-building work carried out by KYC, laid a solid foundation for continued positive change towards tolerance and non-violence in the province. This underlines the need to continue in this direction by contributing towards peacebuilding and conflict prevention, and to do this by working together with different ethnic communities as a team to identify and solve our common problems and needs.

Concerns about youth must be seen as essential to all decision making surrounding the reconstruction and development of Kosovo. Efforts are needed to encourage and maximize their participation in all decisions and processes that affect their lives. Their energy, resilience and optimism may ultimately offer one of the brightest glimmers of hope for a better, more tolerant and peaceful Kosovo.

The experience of KYC in these activities has shown that young people have a lot to say and can be leading actors to improve their own lives and situations, and that of people in their communities. When given the chance, they have participated with enthusiasm, pointing to the need for extending activities.

The creation of a non-violent, peaceful Kosovo, which values the rule of law and the rights and equality of all males and females, is, mainly, in the hands of youth. While the region has received substantial resources to aid its recovery, including resources targeting youth, many

young people are falling through the cracks of mainstream programming. Placing their concerns at the center of addressing the multitude of challenges in Kosovo, will determine Kosovo's path to stability and the prevention of further rights abuses.

Rather than feeling sorry for themselves because of their misery, the young refugees organized themselves to work together to improve their situation. With such a young population, it becomes critical to understand and deal with the problems of this group; better still if they help themselves.

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**Websites**

www.paxchristi.nl (KYC is a partner organisation of Pax Christi))

www.balkanyouthproject.net/eng/01/00.html

www.youthforum.org/em/index.html

www.osce.org/kosovo or osce-kosovo@omik.org (OSCE has supported Kosovo Youth Assembly)

www.womenscommission.org (Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, have cooperated with KYC)

**Notes**

1 Youth focus group discussion, Tirana, Albania, June 1999. Report of the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children.

2 Adolescent-led youth focus group discussion, Kosovo, June 2000. Report of the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children.

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# 9 The Media: Reaching Hearts and Minds

*Francis Rolt**

***Most people immediately make a link between media and conflict, but less often associate the media with peacebuilding. The media, TV, radio and the press, is the medium through which most conflicts around the world are reported, analyzed and explained. The manner in which this is achieved can encourage and support violent conflict, even when propaganda is not the intention. Conversely, just as the media can have an impact on conflict so conflict can have an impact on the media. What is less commonly recognized is that the media has also long been a power for peace in the world. This chapter is about the ways in which the media can and does promote the peaceful resolution of conflict.***

When the great Buddhist emperor Asoka (c. 304-232 B.C) commanded a rock pillar to be erected in Afghanistan and for it to be inscribed in two languages describing how his people should live together in peace, he was using the media of the day (a rock edict) as a peacebuilding tool. Asoka had been so horrified by his own war of conquest against the kingdom of Kalinga, in which 100,000 people were killed and 150,000 injured, that he gave up war. In his rock edicts, dotted across India and beyond, Asoka apologizes to his subjects for the Kalinga war, and reassures those beyond the borders of his empire that he has no expansionist intentions towards them. These rock edicts are among the first forms of peacebuilding media we know about.

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Another example of historical peacebuilding media might be the "broadcast" of information about a peace treaty by the heralds of ancient Greece, or the town criers of medieval Europe, who were historical newscasters. Heralds were used to announce proposals for a truce or an armistice (although like our modern mass media they would also announce the beginning of hostilities).

Since those times many other forms of peacebuilding media – ways of encouraging people to live in peace, to understand one another - have been developed. They range from posters, public service announcements, street dramas, websites, list serves, car stickers, photo exhibitions, film festivals, leaflets, shirt and dress materials printed with messages, and trainings, to radio and TV documentaries, kids' programs, dramas, soap operas, and news programs. To take one example, the Palestinian NGO Middle East Nonviolence and Democracy (MEND) runs a radio soap opera (*Dar Dar Abuna*) which encourages active non-violence among the Palestinian population. The soap shows by example what can be achieved with active non-violence, and has a remarkable following among a young audience.

The advent of mass media in the 20th century – newspapers, radio and TV - meant that war propaganda could be effectively spread amongst a population. The Nazis were among the first to promote a regime of hatred through the radio (the term "hate media" only came to prominence during the Rwanda genocide when a local radio station promoted and encouraged the killing).

In general, differences of language, religion, history and ethnicity have frequently been exploited in the mass media by politicians and others to create fear, exclusion and dominance. From the Balkans to Rwanda to the Middle East and Indonesia, the mass media has been used to demonize

*the other* and to legitimize their extermination. Such use of the media is however not restricted to violent conflicts or wars; everywhere in the world some parts of the media frequently and consistently perpetuate stereotypes and denigrate *the other* – the British tabloid press, or the American shock jock radio talk show hosts, are typical. For example, a presenter on a New York based radio station (WOR-AM) conducted a hate campaign against Indian immigrants in the community of Iselin. Following a particularly vitriolic attack on 12th December 1996, swastikas and ethnic slurs were spray-painted on homes and businesses in Iselin belonging to citizens who came from India. One of these two businesses' window was also hit with gunfire. Additionally, a home belonging to an African American family was painted with a slur and a swastika; all these acts took place the following day.1

In times of crisis or economic difficulty such prejudice easily leads to violent acts and so to violent conflict.

In contrast to the kind of hate media described above, the idea of using the modern mass media as a tool for peacebuilding was slow to get off the ground.

One of the earliest contemporary uses of modern mass media to promote understanding was in 1977, when Walter Cronkite, anchor for the American CBS network, conducted satellite interviews with Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin. Cronkite asked Sadat whether he would be willing to travel to Jerusalem to meet Begin. Sadat agreed, and Cronkite then inquired of Begin whether he would welcome the Egyptian President. By questioning the two presidents directly on air, Cronkite helped launch the peace process which led to Sadat's historic visit to Jerusalem, the first Camp David negotiations, and the signing of the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty.

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**Peacebuilding through the News Media**

On one hand reliable news media can have a positive impact on the peaceful resolution of conflicts, by reducing the impact and spread of rumors – which inevitably feed the flames of a conflict. One example of this is a UN/Fondation Hirondelle radio initiative in the Democratic Republic of Congo; Radio Okapi provides reliable news and current affairs for the first time across the vast country in a number of different languages. Okapi quickly grew into the most popular radio in the country.

On the other hand, as noted above, news media can have a distinctly negative impact on conflict, and is itself often influenced and changed by the conflict environment. It is important to note that it is not just media organizations which are getting involved; peacebuilding organizations, such as Search for Common Ground (SFCG), have been at the forefront of developing peacebuilding media initiatives for years.

Johan Galtung, founder and director of Transcend, professor of Peace Studies, and widely regarded as the founder of the academic discipline of peace research was one of the first people in the West seriously to question the impact of the news media on conflict. At that time few people took his ideas very seriously. Since then the issue has been taken up and developed by many academics, media professionals and organizations, including conflictandpeace.org (London), InterNews (Paris), the Institute for Media, Policy and Civil Society (London), IMPACS(Vancouver), Institute for Media Studies (Copenhagen) and Media for Peace (Bogotá), to name but a few. The main argument has been succinctly expressed by Ross Howard;

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*"For more than fifty years diplomats, negotiators and social scientists have studied conflict and developed a sophisticated understanding of it, just like medicine, business or music. But few journalists have any training in the theory of conflict. Most journalists merely report on the conflict as it happens. By comparison, medical reporters do not just report on a person's illness. They also report on what caused the illness and what may cure it. News reporters can have the same skill when it comes to reporting conflict."2*

The organizations above, which focus almost exclusively on news and current affairs' journalism, conduct trainings for press, radio and TV journalists in peace or "conflict sensitive" journalism. They encourage journalists to question closely their role, their own assumptions, the words they use, and so the impact they have on a conflict. Media for Peace (Medios para la Paz), for example, focuses much of its work on approaches to reporting which can have a positive impact on efforts to achieve peace. Its primary goals are to "disarm" the language – exploring and undertaking actions to ensure that the language used to report an event does not contribute to the perpetuation of violence - and to break through the indifference of the mass media with respect to the armed conflict in Colombia.3

**Peacebuilding through the Non-News Media**

However, even the organizations mentioned do not take on the full potential range of the modern mass media in building peace, as they deal almost exclusively with news and current affairs content. This is a shame given that most media content consists of entertainment, education, human interest stories and advertising – not news. Apart from the 24 hour satellite news

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channels, news and current affairs rarely fill more than 15 percent of the space available on radio, TV or in the press.

What follows is a brief typology of peacebuilding media initiatives, which goes beyond the usual emphasis on news and current affairs journalism and training.

*Type One.* Edutainment, also known as Entertainment-Education or EE, is a media product or series, packaged as entertainment, which sets out to achieve a specific result in terms of audience perceptions and behavior. Soap operas are popular and successful forms of peacebuilding Edutainment on radio and TV, but comic books for adolescents and young adults have also been successful, and there are many other possible forms. SFCG, MEND, BBC World Service Trust and the Panos Institute, amongst others, all produce such radio soap operas. The Panos Institute West Africa, for example, has been involved in the production of a radio soap opera which focuses on a range of issues related to the conflict in the Casamance region of Senegal. In the words of one scriptwriter,

*"You could not talk immediately about the conflict because everyone was afraid. We had to make a program of the positive things, of what unites us and then we could discuss the painful negative things that divide us."*4

*Type Two.* Cultural productions, such as music programs or comic books which attract a specific audience have been used to pass specific messages and to bring up subjects for discussion which might be threatening in a more clearly serious program. Some such shows play only songs which

emphasize peace. Other examples include productions which demand a joint agreement on "our" history from both sides of a conflict. The project Seeds of Peace, which brings together Palestinian and Israeli kids for a summer camp in the USA, asks the participants to produce jointly a film doing just this. While the magazine *Saudi Aramco World* emphasizes only the cultural ties between peoples.

*Type Three*. Cross-conflict productions focus on the presenters, or hosts of a program, or on the writers of an article. Typically they may be two well-known ex-combatants from opposite sides, who agree to work together in order to help the disarmament and rehabilitation of other ex-combatants. Here the symbolic significance of the two presenters working together and behaving normally with each other is almost the main point of the show. Another example might be two newspaper editors from opposite sides of a conflict who agree to write and sign an article together and publish on the same day in both publications.

*Type Four*. Commissioned article and program exchanges in regional conflicts can be extremely effective in terms of normalizing attitudes and relations between different peoples, and in demonstrating that *the other* is facing exactly the same difficulties, problems, joys and sorrows as the listener/reader. Exchanges can be complicated and expensive to undertake because of the need for cross-translation into each of the participating languages, but often have a significant impact.

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*Type Five.* News agency/distribution, but lays a greater emphasis than Type Four on positive viewpoints. In this intervention, an agency commissions, selects and translates a collection of articles and items which offer constructive perspectives and promote dialogue across a conflict. The articles are disseminated each week (or every day), to all sides/language groups, and to a wide audience (newspapers, magazines, organizations and individuals) for re-publication. The intention is to counteract the media's over-emphasis on violence and despair, and to stress the positive. The Common Ground News Service (www.sfcg.org/cgnews/middle-east.cfm) does just this.

**Current debate**

People working in the field of peacebuilding media question constantly. Some questions are perennial, such as can we prove that what we do really works? While other questions have to do with sustainability, and the value-added of media as a peacebuilding tool. The main questions are outlined below.

**Impact Assessment**

If we accept or believe that peacebuilding media works, then how best can we prove it? How are we to measure the impact of what we do on peoples' attitudes, and then on their behavior? After all, it is relatively simple to conduct a survey which demonstrates that a target population's knowledge of peacebuilding techniques has increased, and/or to demonstrate that the number of peacebuilding journalism trainings and the number of radio/TV stations and magazines or newspapers being published have increased. What is very hard to demonstrate is that all this

activity and expenditure has had a significant and positive effect on the attitudes and behavior of that same target audience. This is a major challenge, and one which some agencies and donors are working on together, developing methodologies which can measure these things more accurately.

**Sustainability**

Can peacebuilding media projects in countries in violent conflict ever be self-sustaining? In places where conflict has destroyed and limits all economic activity, media is rarely sustainable without outside funding. The longer the conflict continues the longer the funding must continue. This is largely true despite some examples which suggest ways in which radio, for example, can be more self-sustaining. In Uganda for instance, the radio station Mega FM sells spots to individuals to send messages to friends and loved ones, to announce the loss of a cow, or the imminence of a wedding, and by marketing itself as a mass media tool to humanitarian and aid agencies. Within a short space of time Mega FM has managed to become self-supporting.

**Added value**

Media can target specific populations and groups (gender, age, language etc.), and is relatively cheap. But what do media add which could not be achieved without it? The broadcast media, in particular, has the ability to build attention over time and across a society. In the short term no single article, or radio or TV program, whether it is a soap opera or a current affairs program, can turn a war or even low-level conflict into peace. No single article or program can make an individual, a people, a class or an ethnic group do what they are not already half-convinced to do.

In the long term however, over a number of months and years, targeted media products can reach into the hearts and minds of individuals. In doing so the media can change the atmosphere within which a conflict occurs, subtly alter the environment and the thinking of a large number of people so that they are less likely to engage in violent acts, more likely to listen to reason, and more likely to trust "the other".

Such media can help its audiences counter the war-mongers, help them ignore those politicians and others who would drive them further into violence, or to ever more outrageous acts of hatred and destruction. An example is Search for Common Ground's Studio Ijambo which, over the past nine years, has been producing radio programs in Burundi. It has been credited with changing the nature of the discourse there, of giving Burundians a language with which to discuss things like genocide and the role of politicians, conflict and ethnicity, without resorting to accusation, insult and violence.

**Challenges**

Digital technology, and the changes it has wrought, presents peacebuilders and print, radio and TV journalists, producers and broadcasters with new challenges. Some of these are negative, but any kind of a challenge can also be taken as a positive opportunity.

Digital technology is relatively cheap, so almost anyone can now create television quality images. In Nigeria for example amateur video dramas sell like hot cakes (at one time seventy per week were hitting the market). This is wonderful in some ways, but it also means that established distribution networks can easily be used to reinforce stereotypes, and promote hatred and violence. The opposite is also true of course; that anyone can use the equipment and the

distribution systems to promote peace and understanding, but unfortunately drama and violence are inextricably associated in the minds of most program makers. Few amateur program makers would have a clue what to do if asked to produce a drama without violence.

The same potential for good and bad holds true for news and other information sources provided by individuals and organizations' websites on the internet, by e-mail list-serves, and by bloggers. Much of it is ignorant, prejudiced and encourages hatred rather than understanding, but the other side also exists.

The airwaves are opening up in many countries, and more and more radio and TV stations are being licensed, meaning that competition for the ears and eyes of the audiences increases. This is as true in the North as in the South. That competition plays out in two areas; ownership and content. In the US the National Rifle Association opened a radio station in 2004, which Wayne LaPierre, the organization's executive vice-president, described as a "legitimate packager of news"5.

In general, media owners, whether governments, business people or special interest groups, often have a specific agenda which will benefit other aspects of the power they hold (political/financial/social), or wish to hold.

Peacebuilding rarely figures on most owners' agendas. More work needs to be done with the owners and senior level managers of different media, from the international satellite TV stations, to local newspapers and/or the programmers and manufacturers of computer games. One example of this is the way the Carter Centre in Venezuela has been working with both the powerful private media owners and with senior managers within the state controlled media to lower the tone of the vitriolic debate which splits Venezuelan society – and has threatened to

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spiral out of control on several occasions - into those in favor of and those against President Chavez.

**Collaboration**

Media work is rarely enough to effect change; it is also necessary to work with other NGOs, local associations, agencies and with the stakeholders themselves. In order to promote social change at an individual level across society, we must work with farmers, with the military and militias (combatants and officers/leaders), with government officers and politicians, and with the youth and children. The media alone is not very effective over the the long term, although it can have a powerful short-term impact. Media is attractive to donors and agencies in violent conflicts (specifically radio) because of its reach, and because a radio is small, cheap and easily transportable – people fleeing conflict often take their radio with them. Real, long term peacebuilding projects must work with the media, but they also need to be on the ground working with ordinary people facing the difficulties and dangers of the conflict. The media, or radio, by itself, without reinforcement and support, will have only a temporary effect on a population in real crisis.

**Conclusion**

The field of media and peacebuilding has expanded enormously over the past twenty years, but it is still a small and relatively unknown field. A Google search for "Media and Peacebuilding" produces only sixty eight thousand pages (September, 2004), but a search for "Media and Conflict" produces over five million pages. Some of the latter entries may, of course, have more

to do with peacebuilding than with conflict, but that is itself indicative of the need for a shift in the way the vocabulary is used.

Social change is a complex and difficult process anywhere in the world, and more so in countries or regions in violent conflict. Media at all levels and of all types can and does play a role in either maintaining or in reducing those conflicts. Sometimes the same media outlet plays both roles without being aware of it. Much more can be done to raise awareness among such media outlets, to encourage existing broadcasters to incorporate peacebuilding messages or themes, and to use peacebuilding techniques in making and presenting programs – one such initiative is the Radio for Peacebuilding, Africa project (www.radiopeaceafrica.org).

At the same time peacebuilders (and donors) must recognize that the media is not a magic bullet which can resolve conflicts with a few well-written soap operas, or with a couple of journalism trainings. Media products do have an impact, but they work best over time and in conjunction with other, practical and down-to-earth activities.

**Francis Rolt has been working for Search for Common Ground (SFCG) since 1998, first as Director of Studio Ijambo (Burundi), and now as Director, Common Ground Radio, based in Brussels. SFCG's mission is to transform how people, individuals, organizations, and governments deal with conflict – away from adversarial approaches and towards cooperative solutions. Francis has worked in radio since 1986, for the BBC World Service, Radio Netherlands and Capital Radio (South Africa), amongst others.*

**Notes**

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[1] Information from Radio Netherlands website

www.rnw.nl/realradio/dossiers/html/hateradioamerica.html , Oct. 2004

2 Ross Howard, *Conflict Sensitive Journalism.* IMPACS & IMS, 2003

3 Ross Howard et al., *The Power of the Media, A handbook for peacebuilders*, European Centre

for Conflict Prevention, 2003

4 *The Power of the Media, A handbook for peacebuilders,* op cit

5 BBC World Service website, April 17 2004

**Resources**

**Lead organizations**

BBC World Service Trust – United Kingdom

ws.trust@bbc.co.uk

http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/trust/

Fondation Hirondelle – Switzerland

info@hirondelle.org

http://www.hirondelle.org

IMPACS: The Institute for Media, Policy and Civil Society – Canada

media@impacs.org

http://www.impacs.org

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Institute for Media, Peace and Security – Switzerland

imps@upeace.ch

http://www.mediapeace.org

Institute for War and Peace Reporting – United Kingdom

info@iwpr.org

http://www.iwpr.net

International Media Support – Denmark

Media and Conflict Unit

i-m-s@i-m-s.dk

http://www.i-m-s.dk

InterNews Network – USA

Media, War and Peace section

info@internews.org

http://www.internews.org

Media Foundation for West Africa – Ghana

mfwa@africaonline.com.gh

http://www.mediafoundationwa.org

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Media Institute for Southern Africa – Namibia

For contact, please visit website

http://www.misa.org

Panos Institute International – United Kingdom

panosinstitute@earthlink.net

http://www.panosinst.org

Reporting the World – United Kingdom

For contact, please visit website

http://www.reportingtheworld.org

Search for Common Ground – USA

Common ground productions

search@sfcg.org

http://www.sfcg.org/programmes/cgp/programmes_cgp.html

**Additional websites**

http://www.awmc.com/directory

African Women's Media Center's directory. Featuring more than 200 media companies, NGO's and programmes in Sub Saharan Africa

http://www.ifex.org

International Freedom of Expression Exchange

http://www.cimera.org

Focuses on media development in Central Asia and the Caucasus

http://www.trancend.org

Articles and publications on peacebuilding and information on peace journalism

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Southern Africa (MISA), 2001

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## 9.1 Changing Attitudes through Children's Television: Nashe Maalo in Macedonia

***Growing up in a society that generates fear between the different ethnic communities, Macedonian children have little or no opportunity to get to know children from other ethnic backgrounds. This has hardened existing prejudices and led to the spread of much misinformation. Nashe Maalo (Our Neighborhood) tries to break this cycle of mistrust, by offering the children a television program that deals with interethnic issues and conflict resolution, while remaining fun to watch.*** *By Eran Fraenkel**

Sometimes, we are told, the walls have ears. In the television series called *Nashe Maalo*, the walls have eyes, ears, a voice, and a well-developed sense of purpose. The star of Nashe Maalo is an animated house named Karmen, whose mission is to harbor peace. Karmen is a bit run down, but not without hope, despite years of trying to get grown-ups to listen to her pleas for understanding and cooperation. Karmen decides on a new strategy — she will focus on children instead of adults, and so she selects eight children from Macedonian, Roma, Turkish, and Albanian backgrounds, and creates an opportunity for them to meet. The children become friends and together discover the secrets of the building. By leading them on journeys through magical doorways, she provides them with the opportunity to see and learn about the world from each other's perspectives. Along the way, the kids develop a deeper sense of mutual understanding and respect.

### A Legacy of Separation

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The Republic of Macedonia gained its independence from the Social Federated Republic of Yugoslavia in 1991 without going to war. Macedonia is a country of 2.2 million in which the majority of ethnic Macedonians (roughly 65 percent) live alongside ethnic Albanians (roughly 22 percent) and small percentages of ethnic Turks, Roma, Serbs, Vlachs and others.

Since 1991, the Republic of Macedonia has reformed but not replaced the Yugoslav model defining the positions and privileges of the country's ethno-national communities. Although intended to foster ethno-political pluralism, the result instead has been the deep–seated segregation which is still evident in most domains of Macedonian life.

Children born in the Republic of Macedonia since 1991 have been surrounded by prejudicial images and messages, both private and public, regarding the country's diversity. In many families children quickly internalize the negative vocabulary and attitudes expressed about the "other". For children attending segregated schools, the notion of "us" *and* "them" inevitably develops. However, largely due to the influence of a highly polarized mass media, and in particular television, which is pervasive in Macedonia, these attitudes are subtly changed. Except for one state-run radio and TV network, the media is as starkly segregated as society and rigidly defined by language and ethnic group; there is almost no effort by media emanating from one or another of Macedonia's communities to reach beyond their own communities.

Television programming with "positive" social content intended for kids is virtually non-existent in Macedonia. Children mostly watch cartoons, sports, magazine-style shows, re-broadcast concerts, ubiquitous Spanish-language soap operas, and the news. The inflammatory language and images of TV news reporting only exacerbate this sense of division and hostility

among children. Additional television fare for children consists primarily of films, mostly American, which typically expound the idea that "might makes right."

**Media and Education**

Search for Common Ground is an international non-governmental organization established in 1982 that is dedicated to the transformation and prevention of conflict worldwide. In 1994, the organization established its first field office in the Republic of Macedonia as part of the wider international effort to prevent the spillover of the Yugoslav wars of succession to this newly independent country. From the beginning, Search for Common Ground in Macedonia (SCGM) concentrated on two areas that have remained its primary focus: media and education, which it views as the two crucial vehicles for encouraging and reinforcing the embrace of positive social values in any society. Especially with children, the combination of media and education holds much promise for fundamentally altering the way they view the "other" in their country.

When SCGM first considered the idea of producing an educational children's television program on conflict resolution in 1996, it seemed a very straightforward exercise. "All" that would be required were TV production professionals and people with the requisite knowledge of conflict resolution. However, when production began in 1999, it was clear that, even with extensive preparation, moving from concept to realization would be a complex, delicate, and difficult process.

Search for Common Ground produced Nashe Maalo during five of Macedonia's most turbulent years, between 1999 and 2004.1 First neighboring Kosovo was engulfed in war in 1999, and then in 2001, Macedonia itself endured several months of intercommunal fighting. Nonetheless,

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over these seasons *Nashe Maalo* became one of the most widely watched programs in Macedonia, nearly universally known to children and adults alike.

**Structure and Premises**

Nashe Maalo was intended for children between eight and twelve years of age. Based on a curriculum which set the "educational goals", Nashe Maalo was designed to achieve three primary objectives: 1) to model/teach intercultural understanding; 2) to model/teach conflict prevention through increased cultural awareness, and 3) to model/teach specific conflict resolution skills.

Originally conceived of as "conflict resolution television", the program evolved into something more subtle and complex during the two years prior to production — "intended-outcomes television." Conflict-resolution television implies that a show's primary objective is to identify and resolve specific conflicts. In preparing the educational curriculum, however, SCGM concluded that conflict is a response to rather than an inherent element of relationships among children, even across ethnic lines. SCGM's long-term "intended outcome" was to affect positive change in the knowledge, attitudes, and behavior of Macedonia's children regarding Macedonia as a multi–ethnic society and their life in that society. In other words, it was hoped that children who saw Nashe Maalo would no longer view the "other" as strange, threatening, less worthy, or as someone to be viewed with suspicion, and rather, that the "other" would be viewed as someone who might be different, but who shared common bonds of citizenship and membership in a common society.

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Nashe Maalo was a seamless fusion of entertainment — professionally produced television — and education in the form of continuously researched and monitored messages. To successfully meld the entertainment and educational elements together, SCGM leaned heavily on a model developed by the producer of *Sesame Street*, Children's Television Workshop (CTW, now known as Sesame Workshop), consisting of three basic components — research, contents, and production.

Before production began in 1999, SCGM had already been working in Macedonia for several years, including projects with elementary school children. The Nashe Maalo team was familiar with the day-to-day life of kids in the show's target-age group; with their general social attitudes towards each other; and with their overall behavioral patterns. Nonetheless, the team still needed to conduct baseline research to obtain specific data regarding children's knowledge of "other" children; their concrete attitudes/beliefs about each other; and their own descriptions of how they behave in situations calling for interaction with children from "other" ethno-linguistic groups. This information underlay all subsequent decisions about which issues to present in Nashe Maalo and their relative importance. In consultation with experts across a range of relevant disciplines, SCGM decided to focus in particular on intercultural understanding, and conflict *prevention* flowing forth from this heightened inter-cultural understanding, with conflict *resolution* accordingly receiving less emphasis.

The reasoning behind this was that, with so little contact across the ethnic divide, children's perceptions of their own country and its peoples were based on stereotypes, misinformation, or simple ignorance. Nashe Maalo's first premise, therefore, was that through the show the audience should come to a better understanding of Macedonia's diversity, and beyond that — to

gain deeper understanding of the how those on the other side of the cultural divide actually lived their lives day to day.

A second premise was that by increasing their knowledge, the program could affect children's attitudes about each other. If negative attitudes derive from negative knowledge, positive knowledge should stimulate positive changes in the audience's beliefs and attitudes. Preventing conflict with the "other" was predicated on better understanding the "other", thereby averting the potential escalation of conflict through misunderstanding. The more exposure children had to Nashe Maalo the more the series would increase their knowledge and change their attitude.

The third and most difficult premise was that television could contribute directly to behavioral change — changed attitudes, changed approaches to social interaction, and ultimately (if only theoretically in a distant future) changes in the social dynamic among Macedonia's communities. This was the intended outcome most critical to positive social transformation, since people's actions ultimately determine their society's health and future, even if it would not be possible to predict how long it would take to move from acquiring knowledge to altering attitudes to engaging in new behaviors. For the Nashe Maalo team, correlating the program to behavioral change represented an ongoing challenge, because the program's future itself was uncertain. When SCGM first sought funding for Nashe Maalo, there was only a pledge of support for one season of eight 30-minute programs. Further funding was secured in the middle of the first season, and additional funding for the last two seasons of the program was secured, in large part in response to the outbreak of violence, in 2001.

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**Successes and Challenges**

Given the three intended outcomes — increasing knowledge, changing attitudes, and changing behavior —SCGM considered it essential to be vigilant at all stages of the shows' development and production. The producers, directors, and editors strived to create the most engaging visual TV program, while the Contents Team was concerned with both *visual* and *verbal* accuracy. At first the Contents Team was not involved with the script once a show went into production. Taking heed from viewer feedback though, in later years, the Contents Team participated in every episode not only during the writing but also during production and post-production.

Of the three teams — Content, Research, and Production — it was Research that was most central to the project and which provided the information that SCGM used to determine to what extent the program has achieved its objectives. Monitoring, evaluation and assessment took place in various forms over the five seasons of Nashe Maalo. Beyond the initial formative research, SCGM's Research Team worked with a representative selection of kids between seasons to assess the level of success in attaining its goals. The research examined whether the audience's positive knowledge had increased, and also what if any changes could be seen in the attitudes of the viewers.

For example, research following the first season found that kids could not determine the ethnic identity of several main characters. As a result, the scriptwriters and producers had to introduce several identifying markers to help the audience understand who was who. Simultaneously, however, the Contents Team had to ensure that the shows did not rely on stereotypes that would damage the show's intended outcome of genuine intercultural understanding. In this way, data

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gleaned from "summative research" after each season became "formative data" used to adjust and improve the next season's episodes.

Nashe Maalo became possibly the most widely recognized TV program in Macedonia. In 2001, between the second and third seasons, an independent audience survey found that among children of all ethnicities, geographic locations, ages, and gender, an average of 76 percent watched Nashe Maalo regularly. Although SCGM had created the program for kids age eight to twelve, the survey found that the show's audience ranged in age from five to seventeen, and nearly half of the children's parents also watched the program, though most kids and parents said they did not discuss Nashe Maalo at home. In 2004, following the final season, an audience survey revealed that Nashe Maalo's audience had increased to approximately 95 percent of children and nearly 75 percent of their parents. Most respondents had watched Nashe Maalo for at least three years. By 2004, nearly 45 per cent of adults reported that they talked about the program with their children. These data clearly indicated that SCGM had successfully reached one of its main objectives: saturation.

One unexpected research finding was that Nashe Maalo was not *just* a "kids" TV show, but had become a "family show". However, SCGM did not design the curriculum for adults and was not conducting its summative/formative research with the idea that it could reach adults. When asked to appraise Nashe Maalo, adults tended to regard it as "good entertainment" but did not consider that it influenced their own political or social attitudes. It remains an open question whether a television program that expressly intends to affect the lives of children might be designed to also influence adult attitudes. In any case, one important lesson learned is that more frequent and more detailed audience profiling might have revealed opportunities for SCGM to

exploit. It might have been possible to take advantage of the family viewing habits in Macedonia to stimulate more interaction between generations regarding the program's messages. SCGM has learned from its other family-based programming that for new ideas and values to take root not only is exposure necessary but also an array of approaches and tools that families are able to practice in their most familiar environment.

**Expanding the Reach**

Over the five-year run of Nashe Maalo, Search for Common Ground learned that if a program is designed and produced well, audiences will watch it even if it addresses controversial topics. The organization also learned that if a program is broadcast long enough to saturate its "market", it can attract a very wide audience and can serve as a catalyst for conversation around topics that might not otherwise be discussed. In other words, good television can be a powerful teaching tool. The challenge for Search for Common Ground in producing future intended-outcomes television, however, is to expand the reach of a program beyond teaching from the screen, and to penetrate the daily life of its audience.

** Eran Fraenkel was the executive producer of Nashe Maalo and currently serves as director of Search for Common Ground's Southeast and East Europe Regional Program.*

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***Website***

www.sfcg.org/programmes/macedonia/macedonia_television.html

***Source***

*The Power of the Media, A Handbook for Peacebuilders.* By Ross Howard et al. Utrecht, the Netherlands: ECCP, 2003.

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## 9.2 Operation Fine Girl Exposes Sexual Violence: Witness in Sierra Leone

***A video produced by human rights activists depicting the horrific impact of sexual violence in conflict situations has instigated discussion in Sierra Leone on the impact of civil war. The film, produced by the international NGO Witness, shows how media productions integrated into the work of local NGOs can greatly contribute to enhancing post-conflict reconciliation processes and, potentially, the prevention of severe human rights violations in the future.*** *By Sam Gregory**

In the early 1990s, the possession and use of video cameras in most industrialized countries had become so widespread that almost any individual who wanted to could get access to this technically sophisticated device. The democratization of home video and filming started to revolutionize the way television producers conceived of their programming, how families documented their lives, and how the news agenda was set. Video and communication technologies were also revolutionizing political advocacy. In 1991, one particular piece of video footage, filmed with a simple handheld camera by a private person, made a group of human rights activists particularly aware of the power of moving pictures. One summer night that year, police confronted a man in Los Angeles after he had reportedly neglected a police stop sign. The man, Rodney King, was subsequently severely kicked and beaten, resulting in serious injury. This could have been an incident destined to be kept out of sight of the larger public. However, a bystander had filmed the beating of the man. This footage was shown on television, with huge consequences. Millions of people saw the beating. Massive protests evolved and a huge wave of violent riots occurred in Los Angeles, which lasted for several days.

To the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, the Reebok Foundation and musician Peter Gabriel, the incident proved the emotional and testimonial power of the visual. They decided to establish an organization aimed at putting cameras into the hands of human rights activists all

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over the world, in order to draw the world's attention to violations and mobilize non-violent efforts to stop them.

The organization they set up in 1992, called Witness, has since distributed cameras to hundreds of local human rights defenders in about fifty countries. It also provides training and guidance in order to enable activists to use visual imagery and powerful testimony from the frontlines. The video production made in Sierra Leone was one in a series of videotaped testimony and short documentary films.

**<Box>**

**Supporting human rights groups to use video in advocacy**

Witness views video as an essential tool in human rights work – one that can be deployed as strategically, purposefully and effectively as more formal or traditional forms of documentation and advocacy. Human rights groups apply for partnership with Witness for project-specific relationships of one to three years. The partners usually receive a digital video camera kit, technical and tactical training and, crucially, long-term support in producing, editing and distributing video as part of their advocacy campaigns. With Witness' assistance they prepare and use video in ways that will complement, not replace, other more traditional forms of advocacy and dialogue building. They draw on video's unique power to bring individual stories and voices directly to a human rights decision-making body, a government policy-maker, or a community.Video partnerships are designed to achieve high visibility and/or high impact for these partners' respective advocacy campaigns.

Witness works with a core of between twelve to fifteen organizations worldwide, and also provides training on "social justice video advocacy" to broader networks of human rights organizations.

**<End box>**

*Operation Fine Girl: Rape Used as a Weapon of War in Sierra Leone* is a documentary video that traces the devastating impact of a decade-long civil war on Sierra Leone's young women, thousands of whom were abducted, raped, and/or forced into slavery by soldiers on both sides of the conflict. Over the course of 47 minutes, viewers learn, from the people themselves, the stories of four young women – Hana, Mabel, Fatmata, and Abie – who became victims of sexual violence during the war. While Operation Fine Girl concentrates primarily on the war's impact on women and girls, it also includes testimony by a thirteen-year-old boy, Osman, who was taken from his village, drugged, and forced to fight as a soldier. All five young people speak candidly about their experiences during the civil war and their efforts to put their lives back together in the wake of it. Operation Fine Girl, produced by Witness, filmmaker Lilibet Foster, and a respected Sierra Leonean gender specialist, Binta Mansaray, brings home the reality of the impact of sexual violence during the war on victims and perpetrators. The film has sparked discussion on the topic in the post-war transition process that Sierra Leone has been experiencing during the past few years.

The first-person accounts of the young women and man are placed in a broader context through the filmmakers' interviews with local health and human rights workers. One NGO worker, Cooperation International's Marta Bernassola, describes the systematic character of the violence:

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"First [the women and girls] were abducted, second thing they were terrorized, third thing they were raped. And this was a systematic technique."

This and other interviews with health workers underline how individual cases of sexual brutality combine to cause deep and lasting damage to society as a whole. Sexual violence caused widespread trauma and contributed to the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. In Sierra Leone, as in many other countries, women who are victims of sexual violence are often blamed for the crime. To present as complete a story as possible, the filmmakers managed – at some risk to their own safety – to interview rebel and government military leaders about their groups' role in the violence. They then left it to the viewers to reach their own judgment about the events.

The people who spoke out in the film did so with the hope that their words would make a difference. When they were asked how they would like the film to be used, two of the people featured replied that the simple fact that people would see what had happened to them would be of tremendous value. "So people will see," seems to be a major drive for participation. One of the young women, Fatmata, said:

"I would like you to show the tape to the international audience for them to see what really happened in Sierra Leone. Most of them have only heard about what happened, so this will make them see that we really suffered -- but despite that we are strong and if we are given opportunities we will do better things in life."

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Osman, the child soldier featured in the film, said he hoped that telling his story would lead to understanding of his position, and eventually forgiveness. He explained:

*"I want you to show the tape on TV so that people will see that even though we did bad things, we are remorseful."*

**Ten Years of Civil War**

Over 50,000 people died during the brutal civil war in Sierra Leone that lasted from 1992 to 2002. In addition to clashes between armed rebels and soldiers and large-scale destruction of property, massive human rights abuses took place. After the war, Sierra Leone called on international assistance for reconstruction, rehabilitation of combatants, and refugee resettlement. With help from abroad, Sierra Leoneans started programs to reintegrate former soldiers back into their communities and to resettle thousands of people displaced by the fighting. In August 2000, a Special Court to Sierra Leone was established, based on an agreement between the government of Sierra Leone and the United Nations, and in July 2002 its judges were nominated. Also, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was set up, charged with holding public hearings, and gathering evidence to sustain cases brought to the Special Court.

Human rights groups from the outset were convinced that the issue of sexual violence against women and girls needed to be addressed during the period of reconstruction and reconciliation. However, despite the mounting evidence of the scale of the abuse, which was targeted at all women indiscriminately, regardless of their religious or ethnic background, there was no

guarantee that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Special Court would focus on the specific nature and dimensions of this type of violence. Rape and sexual slavery had only become subject of investigation as war crimes, as recently as 1998, when special courts were created after wars in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Rwanda. Witness, as well as the actors that were to cooperate in the production of the documentary film Operation Fine Girl, saw the potential of video to help put the focus on the issue of sexual violence.

**Outreach and Screenings**

After an initial broadcast on cable television in the USA (Witness leveraged funds from Oxygen Television to produce the program), Operation Fine Girl was released in Sierra Leone just days after the spectacular burning of arms ceremony in January 2002 that formally marked the end of the war. The audience of this first screening consisted of over 160 representatives of NGOs and members of the government.

After Operation Fine Girl debuted, requests for copies quickly outstripped supply. More than 100 copies were distributed to national and some international NGOs in 2002 and 2003. Binta Mansaray, the film's associate producer and Witness' local outreach coordinator, advised organizations on when, where and how to use the tape for maximum impact, in order to draw attention and stimulate advocacy on of the needs of victims and survivors. Many of the public screenings took place outdoors in community settings with large audiences. They were co-hosted by a wide variety of organizations, such as women's groups, investigators of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, schools, churches, health clinics, and United Nations organizations.

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Witness also equipped Binta Mansaray with a television, VCR, and mobile generator to enable her to conduct screenings in rural areas without access to electricity.

In addition to showing the film to the general public, Witness was also keen to reach decisionmakers, both at the national and community level. Operation Fine Girl was quickly recognized by human rights groups as a valuable advocacy tool in their efforts to petition the international community and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to include the issue of sexual violence in their investigations. Members of the TRC who viewed the film were deeply impressed by the girls' accounts. As a result they used the film at village-by-village "sensitization" meetings aimed at educating people about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, encouraging them to come forward and testify.

Operation Fine Girl also played an invaluable role in educating judicial officials. After it was shown to four of the Commission's investigators of gender-based crimes and violations of child rights in Sierra Leone, the officials decided it should be shown to all prosecutor's teams, as part of their staff sensitization drive on gender issues. The documentary has also helped sensitize traditional leaders responsible for administering customary laws that relate to gender issues. Changing attitudes among local leaders is critical, as customary laws promote community stigma and ostracize women who are raped and suffer sexual violence of any kind.

As reconstruction was getting underway in 2002, the video especially helped spark discussion among professionals in health, education and social services about the larger psychosocial impacts of the war. It was also shown to audiences of professionals from local and international NGOs, the government, donors, and advocates for programs targeting women and youth. The film helped these officials in fine-tuning their decisions about policies and resource allocation.

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Operation Fine Girl has helped sensitize communities to the notion that women and girls did not voluntarily leave their families to join warring factions but were instead abducted and forced into sexual slavery. Seeing the stories of people like themselves gave community members an opportunity to start discussing their own experiences. The film has also spurred former combatants and others to come forward with their own testimony about events during the war. During one particular screening in Eastern Province, an audience of over 500 people consisting of ex-combatants and civilians, saw the film. This is what Witness coordinator Mansaray reported on the event:

*"In Segbwema, when the video was screened, some of the ex-combatants shed tears and some of them expressed remorse to the working group team. The overall RUF commander of the Segbwema axis, called Hai Wai – a notorious killer -- walked up to the sensitization team and said he didn't realize that what combatants did to women were videotaped. He added that he did not know that this was how women were treated.*

*Some of the ex-combatant women became very emotional. Some of them cried while listening to the testimony of the girls. It took some time for them to express themselves and when they finally mustered courage to talk, they said they were willing to come forward and explain a lot of what happened to either the Special Court or the TRC. But they added they were concerned about their safety. This information turned out to be very useful because in an NGO meeting with the Registrar of the Special Court, I was able to raise the issue of witness protection."*

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Audiences of up to 500 and 600 people have attended similar screenings in communities all over Sierra Leone, as well as at schools. Responses range from shock, to tears of relief, to occasional comments that the events belong to the past and should no longer be discussed. But overwhelmingly audiences say that the film should be seen by as many people as possible.

**To Conclude**

The Operation Fine Girl video was effective because the interviewees - everyday victims of the civil war - chose to speak out about the truth of their experience. They told candid personal stories, which were representative of the experiences of thousands people across Sierra Leone. The film opened a window for discussion. In community screenings, audience members were then able to relate it to their own experience, and start talking about how to respond to sexual violence both as individuals and as a society. Many women - and many men - have come forward to tell their stories after seeing Operation Fine Girl. Three days of TRC hearings in May 2003 were devoted to the war's impact on women and girls, including testimony by individuals, women's groups, NGOs and international human rights monitors.

Another reason why the film has been effective is that it reflects the larger process of truth seeking. Viewers see and learn the names of the women; they also see and hear rebel and military officials, who are being confronted with the consequences of violence perpetrated by combatants. The inclusion of both perspectives – victim and perpetrator – strengthens the film's credibility and at the same time sustains a process for uncovering the events of the war, determining responsibility, and preventing similar events from ever happening again.

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Operation Fine Girl has also gained an international audience. It has been used for educational, and advocacy purposes in other countries in Africa, Europe and the United States. The film was shown at film festivals, international conferences, and major international media, including The Oprah Winfrey Show, which aired a one-hour program on sexual violence against girls in Africa, featuring footage from Operation Fine Girl.

Witness' work on the post-conflict process in Sierra Leone has not stopped with the film. In 2003-4 Witness partnered with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Sierra Leone to produce a video version of the Commission's final report on the war, making the findings and recommendations more accessible to a far wider audience across Sierra Leone. This video version of the final report will be distributed in English and Krio, and used by a range of locally-based organizations to engage local communities in understanding the findings of the TRC, and to mobilize these communities to press their government for action on the recommendations of the TRC.

** Sam Gregory is a video producer, advocacy trainer, and human rights activist. Since 2000 he has been the program manager of Witness.*

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**Resources**

Excerpts of some Witness videoproductions, are available at the organization's website, www.witness.org

See www.witness.org/training for technical and strategic aspects of using video in human rights advocacy, and www.witness.org/partners for information on partnership.

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**<Personal Story>**

***Understand the differences; act on the commonalities***

***John Marks is founder and President of Search for Common Ground.***

I was 22 years old in 1966 when I joined the US Foreign Service. I anticipated a diplomatic career which, to me, meant a life of negotiating treaties, driving a sports car around Europe, and becoming an ambassador. My first assignment, however, was Vietnam in the midst of war, and I spent 18 months working as a civilian advisor in the *pacification* programme. This experience definitely knocked me off my linear career path, as I became convinced that American policy was wrong. In 1970, after the US invasion of Cambodia, I resigned in protest.

I found a job as the principal assistant for foreign policy to a US Senator who opposed continuation of the American war. For three years, my main task was to help pass legislation that would end direct US involvement in the war. Next, I co-authored a best-selling book that explored the workings of US intelligence agencies, and then I wrote myself an award-winning book on the secret connections between American intelligence and the behavioural sciences.

I had become an advocate for reform and social change. At the same time, I realised that I was increasingly defined by what I opposed. I came to see another possibility: Namely, that I could live my life and do my work from a place, not of being *against* the old system, but of being *for* a new one. In 1982, I founded Search for Common Ground, a non-governmental organization

(NGO) with a lofty vision: To shift the way the world deals with conflict – away from adversarial, *win-lose* approaches, toward non-adversarial solutions.

I saw myself as a social entrepreneur. Unlike a business entrepreneur, my bottom line is not to acquire wealth, but to change the world. Search for Common Ground provides the organisational base – the place to stand – from which to do this work.

When I started, I had one co-worker, a handful of supporters, and a miniscule budget. With the Cold War raging, we focused on building bridges between the United States and the Soviet Union. In the early 1990s, as global conflict became more diffuse, so did our search for common ground.

We began worked closely with governments and multi-lateral organisations, as we expanded our work into the Middle East, the Balkans, Africa, Indonesia and the United States. We currently have a staff of about 375 people, operating out of headquarters in Washington and Brussels and field offices in 11 countries. Thousands of people participate directly in our programmes, and we reach millions more through media projects.

We try to carry out work on a realistic scale – one step at a time. Indeed, we strive to be incrementally transformational. We appreciate that people and nations will act, as they always have, in their perceived best interest. We believe, however, that everyone's best interest is served by solutions that maximise the gain of those with a stake in the outcome. Current

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problems – whether ethnic, environmental or economic – are simply too complex and interconnected to be settled on an adversarial basis. The earth is running out of space, resources and recuperative capacity to deal with wasteful conflict.

The methods we use vary as greatly as the places where we work. However, our methodology is based on the one basic operating principle: *Understand the differences; act on the commonalities.* Within this framework, we have developed a diverse *toolbox* for conflict prevention and transformation. It includes such well-known techniques as mediation, facilitation and training, along with less traditional ones like TV production, radio soap opera, back-channel negotiations and mobilising women and youth.

Above all, we do our work because we believe it makes a difference. For example, in Burundi, we apply our *toolbox* across an entire country. In order to promote peace and national reconciliation, we produce 15 hours a week of original radio programming that reaches 90% of the population; we work directly with hundreds of women's associations to empower women as peacemakers; we sponsor numerous projects to reintegrate youth who have been involved in violence; and we make wide use of music and culture to try to heal ethnic differences.

Not surprisingly, we have also had our share of setbacks. We have worked for 13 years in the Middle East – where we have held scores of workshops for Arabs, Israelis and Iranians, produced several TV series and a radio soap opera, operated a weekly news service and sponsored the Middle East Consortium for Infectious Disease Surveillance. Yet, despite our best

efforts – and those of many other would-be peacemakers – the conflict has escalated. In Liberia in 2003, looters ransacked and destroyed our radio studio. Still, we remain engaged for the long haul – in Liberia, in the Middle East and everywhere else we work. We believe that our work represents hope for the future.

Although the world is overly polarized and violent behavior is much too prevalent, we remain essentially optimistic. Our view is that, despite numerous setbacks, history and human consciousness are moving in positive directions. Failures in peacemaking do not cause us to give up. Rather, they convince us that we – and the world – must do much better.

The challenge is extraordinary, and I consider myself immensely privileged to be able to do the work that I do.

**<End personal story>**

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## 9.3 Unsung Heroes: Studio Ijambo in Burundi

***Radio is by far the most powerful way of spreading information in the Great Lakes region of Africa. Some 85 percent of the people have access to radios. That power has been abused several times. During the horrific killings in Rwanda in 1994, the murders were spurred on by hateful radio broadcasts. Studio Ijambo is attempting to harness the power of radio for constructive purposes.*** By Lena Slachmuijlder*

It is October 1993. Burundi's first democratically elected Hutu president, Melchior Ndadaye, has just been assassinated. Innocent Tutsi civilians are killed by Hutus in revenge for the assassination, seen as having been carried out by the Tutsi-controlled army. This sparks further revenge attacks, with Tutsis killing innocent Hutus to avenge the death of Tutsis. It is a blind cycle of violence.

In Ijenda, in the mountains outside of the capital Bujumbura, a gang of Tutsis arrives, seeking to kill Hutus. Rebecca Hatungimana, a Tutsi woman, immediately takes action, hiding 41 Hutu neighbors in her house. Along with her husband, a military officer, they defend their compound throughout the night from the attackers armed with spears and machetes. Rebecca fearlessly wards them off. Her husband risks his life to defend the property and livestock of the Hutus. During the days that follow, Rebecca's children escort the Hutus to the fields in search of food, before returning to the compound by nightfall.

Rebecca is one of hundreds of unsung heroes in Burundi. These are ordinary people who demonstrated extraordinary courage to save the lives of people of the other ethnic group during

the most difficult moments of Burundi's ethnic violence. For decades, such people were considered traitors for daring to save people who were considered the enemy.

But Rebecca didn't see them as enemies.

*"I did this because I'm convinced that human life is sacred, and that no one would have benefited from the death of my neighbors. I did not protect them because I am a Tutsi or a Hutu. I did it because morality obliges me to act. "*

Later, when tempers and passions subsided, her Tutsi neighbors thanked her for her bravery. "You prevented us from becoming murderers," they told her, with a mixture of regret and appreciation.

Rebecca Hatungimana was one of approximately two hundred individuals honored in April 2004 at a Heroes Summit, which brought together people featured on a radio program called *Inkingi y'ubuntu*, which means *pillars of humanity* or *heroes* in the Kirundi language. The program, which sought out stories of people like Rebecca who bravely rejected violence during years when Burundi was plagued by ethnic conflict, has been produced by Studio Ijambo every week since September 1999 and broadcast on local radio stations.

**Fostering Debate**

Studio Ijambo — *ijambo* means *wise words* in Kirundi — is a radio studio set up by Search for Common Ground in 1995 to produce programs aimed at promoting dialogue, peace, and reconciliation. Studio Ijambo's team of twenty Hutu and Tutsi journalists currently produces

approximately one hundred radio programs per month, which are broadcast on eight radio stations in Burundi, Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

The studio endeavors to provide balanced, accurate coverage and information within and outside Burundi, to foster debate and discussion, to advance the peace process, and to maintain links between Burundi and the outside world. Rather than dwelling on differences, Studio Ijambo's productions emphasize the cultural base that all the different communities in Burundi share, and in that way, it strives to keep hope alive during trying times.

In conceptualizing the *Inkingi y'ubuntu* or *Heroes* program, Studio Ijambo aimed to make it known that not everyone had participated in the various killings and massacres over the years. Adrien Sindayigaya, one of the founding journalists of Studio Ijambo and a producer of the Heroes program (now deputy director of Studio Ijambo) explains:

*"Negative stereotypes of Tutsis and Hutus plagued the society, preventing a climate of trust and collaboration. Each group accused the other of having committed more atrocities than the other; the idea that some individuals had broken away from that negative stereotype and saved human lives was simply unbelievable for many Burundians."*

Thus, the idea for the *Heroes* radio program was born, along with many challenges. For each program the producers wanted to include interviews with both the person or persons whose lives had been saved and the "hero" in question, as well as interviews with officials, neighbors and friends who had witnessed the act of courage. But people were often afraid to talk, fearing their

testimonies would cause problems with their neighbors and local officials, or even reprisals from neighbors who had committed violent acts.

Slowly, however, people agreed to speak, and the program was produced and broadcast week after week. There was the story of Evariste Ndabaniwe, the cousin of the first democratically elected president, who called for calm and prevented his neighbors from massacring his Tutsi work colleagues on the morning after the president's assassination, "You cannot tell me your grief is more than mine," he told the attackers. "But this is no reason to lose more human lives." There was the story of Barasukana, a local administrator who defied military officers attempting to round up Hutus to be killed in 1972. Twenty years later, Barasukana was protected by his same Hutu neighbors when the violence turned against Tutsis in his neighborhood.

**Promoting understanding**

*Inkingi y'ubuntu* is just one example of the innovative ways Studio Ijambo uses media to promote understanding and reconciliation. It also produces a wildly successful radio soap opera with a message of reconciliation. *Umbanyi Niwe Umuryango* (Our Neighbors, Our Family) is broadcast every week, and tells the ongoing story of Hutu and Tutsi families who live next door to each other. It focuses on the day-to-day problems of life that they surmount together. One independent survey carried out in the late nineties reported ninety percent of all listeners had tuned in to at least six out of eight programs broadcast in a one month period

Other example of the sorts of positive programs produced by Studio Ijambo include:

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. A repatriation program co-produced by Studio Ijambo and refugee journalists living in the refugee camps in Tanzania;

. A program on truth, justice and reconciliation, which includes examples from other countries around the world that have experienced similar transitions;

. A program on the implementation of the various peace accords and cease-fire agreements, in which ordinary people, civil society, political and government leaders are interviewed;

. A children's program that examines the problems they face because of the war, and their dreams and hopes for the future;

. A music program featuring musicians around the country who are singing for peace and against AIDS;

. A daily youth-driven live phone-in program, which tackles issues facing youth and facilitates youth participation by sending journalists into communities with cell phones to enable young people to contribute to the program;

. A program that examines women's rights and their participation in the peace process on a grassroots and national level;

. Current events magazine programs that examine all issues related to the transitional process, including the road to elections, the demobilization process, and legal and institutional reform;

. A human rights program, based on real-life cases, that seeks to raise awareness of human rights issues and advocate against injustice.

**Facing Challenges**

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For the team of journalists at Studio Ijambo, the great challenge is to find ways to use radio to advance the difficult process of transition in Burundi and the Great Lakes region. And that means addressing important and vexing issues: the repatriation of hundreds of thousands of refugees; the demobilization of tens of thousands of former rebels and creation of new national armies acceptable to all groups; the search for a way to deal with the crimes and injustices of the past; and the road to democratic elections.

Each of these transitional processes presents its own risks and dangers, with cross-border influences on the conflicts in Burundi, Rwanda and the DRC. Ethnic groups are still vulnerable to manipulation by political leaders seeking to ignite ethnic sentiments to serve political interests. But journalists in Burundi inhabit a different reality than most western journalists. They themselves are intimately involved in the conflict; every single journalist has lost members of his or her immediate family through the decades of violence. They do not always share the same analysis of Burundi's history. But they do share a vision of the future: a Burundi where conflict is dealt with through dialogue, and not violence.

One strategy that is part of the Studio Ijambo approach is to pair Hutu and Tutsi journalists when doing stories. The original motivation was concern about security — it was thought that it would always be safer to enter a Hutu area if a Hutu was present, and a Tutsi area if a Tutsi was present. But it soon became clear that the approach had other advantages. Two reporters from different ethnic groups would have different perspectives, and the listening audience would also perceive the reports as more balanced with both a Hutu and a Tutsi reporter.

**Evaluating the Impact**

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Measuring Studio Ijambo's impact entails an examination of changes in the attitudes, perceptions and behavior of its listening audience. Unfortunately, in the Great Lakes region, that is not always a simple task. In the context of conflict, it is further complicated by the fact that other matters tend to be more than minor distractions; the Studio Ijambo staff is often obliged to respond to destabilizing rumors, erupting crises and emerging tensions.

Nonetheless, there are key indicators that help to assess the impact of the work, revealed through independent evaluations of Studio Ijambo's programs. For example:

. *Popularity:* Surveys reveal that some of the programs have extremely large and loyal listening audiences.

. *Credibility*: According to an independent evaluation conducted at the end of 2001, 95 percent of respondents answered positively to the question "Do Studio Ijambo programs tell the truth?" In the same evaluation 89 percent of respondents said that Studio Ijambo programs contribute to the promotion of dialogue, 86 percent said the programs contribute to reconciliation and 91 percent said they contribute to the return of peace in Burundi.

. *Acceptance*: Studio Ijambo journalists are very rarely refused an interview, or access to a rebel or military-controlled zone of the country. Leaders of all political parties, rebel movements, the military, the government, and civil society collaborate eagerly with Studio Ijambo, confident that their perspectives will not be distorted or manipulated. This is not the case with many other journalists from other media outlets.

. *Recognition:* Studio Ijambo journalists have consistently been recognized for their work both locally and internationally. Recent awards include, locally, the *Inform for Peace* award and the *Fight against Impunity* award, and internationally, recognition as an IFJ Tolerance Prize finalist,

the Radio France International Jean-Hélène prize, and runner-up in the OneWorld/UNICEF Children's Lives, Children's Voices Prize.

. *Promoting dialogue:* Studio Ijambo programs aim to bring together diverse viewpoints and to seek solutions to conflict. Statements by Burundians interviewed by the evaluators indicated that those efforts are appreciated. One interviewee commented, "When people fight they do not stop to understand each other's needs. They are busy shooting at each other. Studio Ijambo helps them hear each other's needs and issues; this facilitates negotiations, and puts an end to the fight." Another said, "Many Burundians did not know the conditions in refugee camps. When you do not know these conditions, you do not realize how much they need to come back to their homes. [Studio Ijambo's] work made the link between the refugee camps and the rest of the society, which touched many people, including me personally."

**Sustainability for the Future**

In 2005, Studio Ijambo will celebrate its tenth anniversary. "We are reflecting on how to adapt to the new context," comments Adrien Sindayigaya, who notes that the media environment has changed radically since 1995. Then, there was just one, government-controlled radio station, but now the airwaves are crowded with independent stations. "This is one reason why Studio Ijambo now aims to focus more on training and capacity building in Burundi and the region."

In addition to several national trainings in recent years, Studio Ijambo organized a nine-day regional peacebuilding media-training seminar in January 2004 with participants from eight countries in the region. This regional seminar is being followed up with other initiatives, including the preparation of a regional peace-building radio program in three languages,

exchanges of journalists within the region, and the organizing of internships at Studio Ijambo for journalists from the region.

In 2002, journalists from Studio Ijambo created their own local association and launched a private radio station, called Radio Isanganiro, Kirundi for *Crossroads Radio*. This radio station has the largest coverage of any private radio station in Burundi, and is also heard in much of Rwanda, in the Burundian refugee camps in Western Tanzania and the province of South Kivu in the DRC. Informal surveys have revealed Radio Isanganiro to be one of the two most popular radio stations in Burundi.

Sustaining the positive work of Studio Ijambo will require the diverse team of Studio Ijambo journalists to continue to work together. Just as the Heroes took enormous risks when they dared to stand up to pressure and refused to conform to the expectations of their neighbors, Studio Ijambo journalists frequently face pressure and threats from their communities for daring to expose injustice or corruption and for challenging authority. As Adrien Sindayigaya explains:

"The strength to resist this pressure and to persevere lies at the heart of the vision that Studio Ijambo journalists share: that we are contributing to building peace. It's our knowledge of this that enables us to work at it step by step, day after day, and not lose hope."

** Lena Slachmuijlde r is the director of Studio Ijambo*

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Search for Common Ground Burundi

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**<Box>**

**Talking Drum Studio in Liberia and Sierra Leone**

***The "talking drum", uniquely West African, speaks thorough its sounds and links communities and audiences over generations. The term "talking drum" was appropriated for Search for Common Ground's independent media studios in Liberia and Sierra Leone and has become a powerful tool for peace in two nations beset by violent conflict.*** By Frances Fortune*

Radio listeners in Liberia have recently become accustomed to the lives of Mama Colbol who runs a cook shop; Jartu, a young female hustler, and the old storyteller J-West. They are the main

characters in the soap opera *Today is not Tomorrow*, which is aired three times a week. The events in the drama series generate tremendous discussion and analysis by the audience as they seek to predict what choices the main characters will pursue. Multiple answers and solutions are possible to the various dilemmas and challenges faced by the characters. The ambiguity of the titles is as important as the story that chronicles the day-to-day lives of a diverse group of ordinary people, and provides them with hope. Through these characters, the soap opera intends to educate and create awareness on a wide range of social, political, economic and conflict issues. Today is not Tomorrow also provides a source of entertainment and respite from the present hardships of living in Liberia, as well as a source of inspiration to those who relate closely to the characters.

The Liberian soap opera was build on the successful daily soap opera in neighboring Sierra Leone, called *Atunda Ayenda* (Lost and Found). The local Talking Drum Studio, set up by the international NGO Search for Common Ground, produces both programs. The organization uses media as a principal tool for peacebuilding and to create opportunities for transforming conflict. Talking Drum Studios are multi-media studios with multi-ethnic teams of journalists and producers, to stimulate national dialogue around critical issues. It produces a wide range of radio and audio programming, along with print articles and videos, in a “common ground” approach that factors in all the key stakeholders in the conflicts, while also stimulating the search for solutions.

Both studios’ main niche is drama. Drama in the form of radio programming has huge popular appeal across all age ranges, including young and old. Atunda Ayenda has become a platform for youth issues and concerns. In an impact survey conducted in 2003, youth reported that Atunda

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Ayenda raised important issues that youth were discussing among them. This is compelling in a country where 45 percent of the population consists of young people, and the issues of disenfranchisement that fed the violent cycle of war continue to be present. Everyday, following BBC's Focus on Africa, Sierra Leoneans all over the country tune to watch the daily episode that is aired on eighteen stations with almost national coverage.

Radio in this region is still in its infancy. There are few if any independent producers on the radio, despite the boundless opportunities to use radio as a tool for peacebuilding and development. Producing programs is costly, and most radio stations do not have the resources to enable them to produce national level programming. In partnership with local radio stations, radio programs are aired through local FM radio stations around the country. These programs are recorded on cassette tapes and distributed through a variety of networks. The programs are in the lingua franca and Talking Drum Studio is developing its capacity to do more programming in local languages as it appeals to the audience and they have a deeper appreciation of the content. TDS also helps to develop the capacity of the local FM stations to produce good community programming. TDS provides equipment to help them gather community voices, offers training in production processes and support to their own production capacity.

* *Frances Fortune is* Director of the Regional Office in West Africa of Search for Common Ground

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**Source**

*The Power of the Media, a Handbook for Peacebuilders*. By Ross Howard et al. Utrecht, the Netherlands: ECCP, 2003.

**Websites**

www.sfcg.org (for information on the specific work of the national programs).

www.talkingdrumstudio.com (programs for Sierra Leone TDS)

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# 10 Faith-based organizations: The Religious Dimension

Douglas Johnston*

***Religious warfare is a theme running through all of human history, despite the fact that the core of almost all religious traditions is built around a quest for peace. Accepting the fact that religion is both powerful and persuasive, it becomes important to look beyond the secular approaches to conflict prevention or resolution and examine the potential of faith-based interventions.***

In the world of diplomacy, particularly in the West, secularism and the rational-actor model of decision-making reign supreme. The purposeful exclusion of religious imperatives and other "irrational" considerations that are playing such a significant role in today's disputes has left foreign policy practitioners with an inadequate frame of reference for dealing with problems of communal identity that typically take the form of ethnic conflict, tribal warfare, and religious hostilities. Clearly, a broader perspective is needed, one that acknowledges that matters of faith can play a central role in conflict, that identity is not determined by lines on a map but by emotional bonds of culture and blood, and that passions of the heart and soul are every bit as important as traditional considerations of political power, resources, and diplomatic protocols when dealing with identity-based conflicts. And here, it becomes useful to examine the positive role that religious or spiritual factors can play in actually preventing or resolving conflict.

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This chapter explores the potential of faith-based approaches to conflict prevention and conflict resolution. Faith-based approaches represent viable and often very effective alternatives to more traditional approaches. They can take the form of interventions by outside agencies and organizations rooted in religious institutions, or they can involve local religious bodies themselves, acting with the moral authority they possess to cool tempers and promote reconciliation. They can also involve religious leaders bridging the divide between faiths to engage in dialogue, build relationships, develop trust, and work together in addressing common problems. In fact, there are numerous examples of faith-based interventions by players both large and small, ranging from the church invoking its temporal power on the one hand to the activities of spiritually-motivated laypersons acting on the basis of their personal faith on the other.

## Faith-based Diplomacy

Samuel Huntington noted in his *Clash of Civilizations*1 that religion is the defining element of culture; and here a new concept called faith-based diplomacy merits our attention. Simply put, faith-based diplomacy incorporates religious concerns into the practice of international politics. Operationally it involves making religion part of the solution in some of the intractable conflicts that currently plague the international landscape. How this translates in practice varies from one conflict to the next, since every conflict is unique. The approach itself, however, is often built around the role that religious faith plays in the lives of the protagonists, appealing to the moral compass that is presumably inherent in those who are guided by their religious convictions.

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Among those who are best equipped to practice this form of diplomacy are religious leaders and institutions and some non-governmental organizations (NGOs). As the concept of national sovereignty continues to erode under the steady onslaught of economic globalization and technology change, the power of state-centric political bodies is diminishing accordingly, and NGOs are stepping in to fill the vacuum. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the realm of conflict prevention and peacebuilding. With many of today's conflicts exceeding the grasp of traditional diplomacy, religious actors are becoming increasingly engaged in peacemaking around the world. Clearly, religious reconciliation coupled with official or unofficial diplomacy is seen by many to offer greater potential for dealing with identity-based conflicts than do the realpolitik approaches so dominant during the Cold War. As appealing as this sounds, however, there are a number of formidable challenges to using religion as an instrument of peace, not the least of which is the significant role it has played over time in both instigating and exacerbating conflict.

**Religion as an Instrument of Peace**

As everyone is well aware, religion is a two-edged sword. It can cause conflict or it can abate it. All too often, the religious contribution to social evolution has been characterized by intolerance, divisiveness, and resistance to change. Clearly, the kind of absolutism that sometimes attends religious convictions does not lend itself to negotiating meaningful compromise. Moreover, the key virtues of religious persuasion – neighborly concern, the betterment of humanity, and (in most cases) one's right relation with one's creator (for those religions that include a creator) – are often too weakly rooted to prevent their co-option by the forces of power politics. Thus it is

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that religion in far too many instances is used as a badge of identity or a mobilizing vehicle in aiding and abetting conflict for political ends. Sadly, the shelves of the world's libraries are replete with volumes on religion's negative contributions to world history.

Often overlooked in the negative stereotyping of religion's relation to conflict is the positive role it can play in actually preventing or resolving hostilities through the increased trust that it can introduce in certain situations. It was not until the publication ten years ago of *Religion, the Missing Dimension of Statecraft* 2, that this aspect of religious activity was systematically examined. Ever since the Enlightenment, it had been axiomatic that religion was to have a declining influence in the affairs of humankind. Hence, its all-but-total absence from the policymaker's calculus and the uninformed policy choices that have flowed from that neglect.

With religion's resurgence following the Cold War, it has become clear to many policymakers that religion is now far too important to be marginalized as it has been in the past. Indeed, although there are still many in Western policymaking circles who underappreciate its peacemaking potential, others are beginning to see it as a defining element of national security. Clearly, there is an urgent need to understand the religious dynamics at play in any given conflict situation if one is to deal effectively with their confrontational aspects or, perhaps more importantly, to capitalize effectively on their harmonizing elements.

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**Faith-based Intervention**

As set forth in *Faith-based Diplomacy: Trumping Realpolitik*,3 the sequel to *Religion, the Missing Dimension of Statecraft*, there are several situations that particularly lend themselves to faith-based intervention:

.Conflicts in which religion is a significant factor in the identity of one or both parties to the conflict, as is the case in Kashmir.

.Third party mediation in conflicts where there is no particular religious dimension present, as exemplified by the Community of St. Egidio's role in ending the civil war in Mozambique (see "Peace Processes" in this volume for a detailed discussion of this intervention).

.Conflict situations in which religious leaders on both sides of the dispute can be mobilized to facilitate peace, as has recently taken place through the work of the International Center for Religion & Diplomacy (ICRD) in the civil war between the North and the South of Sudan.

.Protracted struggles between two major religious traditions that transcend national borders, as has been the case over time with Islam and Christianity.

.Situations in which the forces of realpolitik have led to an extended paralysis of action as was the case in Cuba prior to the Pope's visit to that country in 1998.

Included among the attributes that religious leaders and institutions bring to bear in promoting peace and reconciling differences between opposing parties are (1) credibility as a trusted institution; (2) a respected set of values; (3) moral warrants for opposing injustice on the part of governments; (4) unique leverage for promoting reconciliation among conflicting parties,

including an ability to re-humanize situations that have become dehumanized over the course of protracted conflict; (5) a capability to mobilize community, national, and international support for a peace process; and (6) an ability to follow through locally in the wake of a political settlement. Finally, because religious peacemakers often operate out of a sense of calling, there is an inspired ability to persevere in the face of major, otherwise debilitating obstacles.

**Faith-based NGOs**

The range of religious actors spans a continuum, with the temporal power of religious institutions defining one end of the spectrum and the personal initiatives of spiritually-motivated laypersons defining the other. Between these extremes lie the initiatives of faith-based NGOs. As contrasted with governments and secular NGOs, faith-based NGOs offer many of the attributes discussed above for religious leaders and institutions, and often operate with two distinct advantages. First, when working through religious institutions as they often do, faith-based NGOs tend to maintain closer linkages with those whom they serve. These institutions provide penetrating access to the local community and are well-positioned to reinforce accountability for any agreements that may be reached. The second advantage relates to the moral authority that faith-based NGOs bring to policy debates, which often elicits a greater receptivity to their agendas from the principals to the conflict.

Thus, to the extent that faith-based NGOs can constructively exploit their faith-based identities, relationships of trust and far-reaching networks, they offer a vital (and too often overlooked) tool for conflict avoidance and mitigation. Beyond their increasingly recognized role in conflict

mediation, these NGOs are also well-suited to the tasks of conflict prevention and post-conflict peacebuilding, neither of which represents an easy challenge.

As popular as interreligious dialogue has become as a prescribed remedy for reconciling strained relations between disaffected religious factions, its perceived worth is probably overrated if it only amounts to ad hoc meetings and a sterile exchange of views about belief systems. If, however, it includes a mandate for action and a commitment to meet on an ongoing basis, then the relationships that result will likely lead to increased trust, at which point all things become possible. Faith-based NGOs are among the best equipped to facilitate this kind of trust.

**Points for Consideration 4**

1. *Every conflict that takes place is inherently unique, driven as much by personalities as circumstances. Not surprisingly, each also has unique lessons to convey. Among the findings gleaned from a range of faith-based interventions by religious leaders and institutions (including faith-based NGOs) are the following.*

2. *Credibility and Moral Authority*

*Credibility* is essential for successful mediation. While this is obvious, and as applicable to non-religious peacemakers as it is to religious peacemakers, the fact that outside religious organizations often have a long-term presence in an area affected by conflict means that their mediators may begin an intervention with credibility that others do not possess at the outset. For example, in northern Mali, Norwegian Church Aid was able to play a constructive role in

conflict resolution because of the credibility it had already established in its development work (see "Development and Peacebuilding" in this volume for a detailed discussion of this intervention).

*Integrity of practice* is equally essential. For example, using faith-based mediation as an entrée for religious proselytization would quickly undermine the intervener's credibility. On the other hand, people will respond to an organization that pursues its work in a manner that is consistent with the task at hand. For example, the Program Pendidikan Damai in Aceh, Indonesia has focused youth education efforts on traditional Islam and its inherent peacefulness in its efforts to address violence in that region. A similar emphasis has been institutionalized in Cambodia where Thich Nhat Hanh has organized Dhammayietra peace walks built around the nonviolent nature of Buddhism (described more fully later).

In third-party mediation/intervention, religious peacemakers should *capitalize on religious beliefs and symbols* in finding a common religious language of conciliation that can foster a genuine spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation. When sensitively applied, such language and symbolism can aid in getting to the deeper issues, as the International Center for Religion & Diplomacy has experienced in its faith-based work in Kashmir where enduring reconciliation has been achieved between several Hindu and Muslim communities.

- Religious leaders are also uniquely positioned to use their *moral authority* and influence to encourage mutual understanding within their communities. For example, while the headlines out of Iraq may be portraying Iraq's Sunni and Shiite communities uniting in violent resistance to Coalition forces, the truth is that Iraqi

religious networks are working behind the scenes to defuse some of the most explosive confrontations and reign in the most extreme clerics. Whenever possible, serious consideration should be given to including religious leaders in formal peace negotiations. Not only does their presence provide a moral authority that is often otherwise missing and an enhanced capability for dealing with the kinds of religious issues that sometimes arise in such negotiations, but their often unrivaled influence at the grassroots level can be useful in ensuring that any political settlement that emerges will be lasting in nature. In Sri Lanka, both the Congress of Religions and the Inter-religious Peace Foundation, which are composed of religious leaders from the four main religious groups, have made strides in bringing leaders from the Buddhist and Tamil communities into negotiations with the government. It is clear that in a country such as Sri Lanka, where all religious groups carry a political identity, leaders from each faith must work together to encourage dialogue between their respective community leaders.

? Religious communities can also provide *social cohesion* in the aftermath of violent conflict and *spiritual support* to help people face the agonizing pain and suffering, with some prospect for the kind of forgiveness that can break the normal cycle of revenge. Illustrative of this dimension is Anglican Bishop Desmond Tutu's leadership of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which facilitated a peaceful transition to multiracial democracy.

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*3.* ***Networks Large and Small***

? Religious networks are the largest and best-organized civil institutions in the world today. From the smallest village to the largest city, religious communities often provide the largest social infrastructure for human care. Religious communities' mosques, churches, temples and other social structures are located in virtually every village, district and city. These organizations range from regularly and frequently convened assemblies designed for worship and reflection to those specifically dedicated to educational, health, humanitarian, or communication missions. Often spanning this remarkable panoply of institutions is a network that includes national, regional, and international religious structures. Taken collectively, religious social structures represent significant channels for communication and action that, when engaged and transformed, enable religious believers to function as powerful agents of change in the transformation of conflict.

? Secular institutions are increasingly acknowledging the potential of religious communities to serve as partners in addressing common concerns such as armed conflict, human rights violations, and poverty. International development organizations like UNICEF, for example, are beginning to seek out religious networks for their ability to reach large numbers of people and their formidable capacity to effect change. Whether the structures are part of a working network or an association of faith-based organizations, or are less formal, most religious

communities are committed to collaborative work for justice and peace, and they generally have dedicated structures that allow for such collaboration.

*4.* ***Connecting with Other Stakeholders***

? It is important to *keep all of the stakeholders closely informed* of the proceedings and to effectively coordinate the involvement of Track 1 and/or Track 2 diplomats. Failure to facilitate interreligious dialogue or to work with religious leaders, for example, can sometimes lead to communal schisms and undermine economic development efforts. Such has been the case in Sri Lanka where several organizations of Buddhist monks have called for the banning of 37 local and international NGOs which they claim support and conduct "unethical conversions" to Christianity. Equally important, it is always preferable to *develop indigenous ownership* of conflict prevention and peacebuilding initiatives as early in the process as possible.

? By contrast, when faith-based organizations work within communities to encourage participatory processes on matters not directly related to conflict prevention — community development activities, for example — those activities can help build trust within the community by bringing together community leaders from different religious and ethnic groups. Where World Vision, the ecumenical Christian relief and development organization, has been engaged with communities in collaborative activities across ethnic and religious divides, it has seen reduced tensions, greater respect for the dignity and rights of other groups, and enhanced capabilities within communities to deal with conflict when it arises.

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Some faith-based NGOs have gravitated to peacebuilding as a natural extension of their work in relief and development. A holistic view of development work encompasses peace, justice, and security as integral components, and *peacebuilding thus becomes an extension of the traditional emphasis*. In the case of Catholic Relief Services (CRS) in Rwanda, for example, this shift in approach evolved naturally from an enhanced understanding of its own role in the community that it was serving, following the genocide of 1994. Where CRS was formerly focused on development and poverty reduction, it is now actively involved around the globe in the promotion of peace and justice, and particularly in addressing the root causes of religious and ethnic conflict.

## Conclusion

The challenge of harnessing religion's transcendent qualities in the cause of peace is formidable and not for the faint of heart. Not only is this work of faith-based diplomacy intellectually, psychologically, and emotionally draining, but it involves significant risks as well. There are almost always vested interests in every conflict that want to see that conflict continue, and a number of spiritually inspired peacemakers have paid the ultimate price for their efforts — Mahatma Gandhi, Anwar Sadat, and Martin Luther King, Jr. to name a few of the better known. The need for this kind of spiritual engagement, however, is only growing more urgent with the passage of time. From violence-plagued urban slums, to remote villages on the fringes of the Sahara, to the green hills of Mindanao, there is solid proof that it works. The cases described in the following pages are only a few examples of what is possible.

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**Notes**

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3 Dr. Johnston (ed): *Faith-based Diplomacy: Trumping Realpolitik.* Oxford University Press, 2003.

4 These points draw on a number of sources, including the United States Institute of Peace *Special Report 76: Faith-Based NGOs and International Peacebuilding* (October 22, 2001), available online at www.usip.org/pubs/specialreports/sr76.html , and contributions from William F. Vendley of the World Conference of Religions for Peace.

**Resources**

**Lead organizations**

All Africa Conference of Churches – Kenya

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secretariat@aacc-ceta.org

http://www.aacc-ceta.org/

Catholic Relief Services – USA

Peacebuilding programme

WebMaster@CatholicRelief.org

http://www.crs.org

Center for World Religions, Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution – USA

crdc@gmu.edu

http://www.gmu.edu/depts/icar/

Community of St. Egidio – Italy

info@santegidio.org

http://www.santegidio.org/en/

Coventry University – United Kingdom

Centre for the Study of Forgiveness and Reconciliation

a.rigby@coventry.ac.uk

http://legacywww.coventry.ac.uk/legacy/acad/isl/forgive/index.htm

International Center for Religion and Diplomacy – USA

postmaster@icrd.org

http://www.icrd.org

Life and Peace Institute – Sweden

Tools for peace? The role of religion in conflicts programme

info@life-peace.org

http://www.life-peace.org/

Mennonite Central Committee – Canada

mccwash@mcc.org

http://www.mcc.org/

World Conference of Religions for Peace – USA

info@wcrp.org

http://www.wcrp.org

World Council of Churches – Switzerland

Justice, Peace and Creation programme

For contact, please visit website

http://www.wcc-coe.org/

**Additional websites**

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http://www.usip.org/religionpeace/index.html

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-Building interreligious trust in a climate of fear. An Abrahamic trialogue. Special Report, February 2003

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## 10.1 Struggling for a Just Peace: Naga Churches in North East India

***Through a mix of military and political measures and economic incentives, the government of India has tried - and failed - for years to solve the several conflicts in the northeast of the country. From the Naga side a long and violent insurgency had failed to achieve the goal of political independence. That is why the churches and civil organizations stepped in and did what the government could not: stimulating the participation of insurgent groups in a peace process, developing an active constituency for a peaceful settlement, and bringing hope that a viable and mutually-agreeable solution could be found.*** By Dan Buttry*

In January, 2000 a small crowd of Christians gathered in front of the tomb of Mahatma Gandhi, the Hindu activist called "the Father of India." The Christians were all Nagas, an indigenous people of Mongolian origin living in the hills of northeast India and northwest Myanmar. They prayed at Gandhi's tomb for peace, laying a wreath. Then they marched in the streets of Delhi, joined by many Naga students from nearby universities. Gandhi was revered by the Nagas because in 1947 he told a delegation of Naga leaders "Nagas have every right to be independent". Nagas declared their independence on August 14, 1947, one day before India's independence from British rule. When Gandhi was assassinated his assurances died with him as the new Indian government refused to recognize Naga aspirations for independence.

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**India's longest running insurgency**

India's northeast is one of Asia's hottest trouble spots, with as many as thirty armed insurgent organizations operating and pushing demands ranging from autonomy to secession. Four of the seven northeastern India states, Assam, Manipur, Nagaland and Tripura, witness scales of conflict that can be categorized as low intensity wars. Between 1992 and 2002, there have been 12,175 fatalities due to insurgency and other armed conflicts in the region. The fight of the Naga tribal separatists is India's longest running insurgency. Nagaland is one of the few regions of India that is predominantly Christian.

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Naga protests and resistance to the incorporation of their land into the Indian union began to steadily grow. Then in 1955 the Indian Army occupied the Naga areas and martial law was declared. Violence quickly escalated. The Indian Army engaged in massive destruction, destroying entire villages and sending families into the jungles where many starved. Naga church and human rights officials estimate that over 200,000 Nagas have died in the conflict since 1955, a number that the government to India claims is grossly inflated. However, every Naga can tell a story of personal loss from the war.

In the 1960s and 1970s Baptist church leaders initiated efforts to halt the violence. Eventually the Shillong Accord was signed in 1975 as a result of these efforts, but the peace agreement was fatally flawed. Key Naga resistance leaders were left out of the process, and the accord agreed to incorporation into the Indian union. The Nagas, who had only one political organization up to that point, the Naga National Council (NNC), split into factions supporting and opposing the

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Shillong Accord. The new opposition faction was the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN). The factions began fighting each other. Later both the NSCN and NNC splintered further, sometimes with horrifying violence, over issues of leadership, distrust and fears of secret agreements with India. Since 1975 as many Nagas have been killed by other Nagas as have been killed by Indian military forces.

**A New Peace-making Strategy**

A new generation of church leaders emerged in the 1990s who were determined to pursue afresh peace initiatives. The vast majority of Nagas, perhaps as many as 80 percent, identify themselves as Baptists, the fruit of over 130 years of American Baptist missionary work. The missionaries had been expelled by the Indian government in the early years of the war, but the Naga Baptists continued to grow and thrive even amid dire circumstances. In November, 1996, after some preliminary contacts, Baptists leaders V.K. Nuh and Wati Aier met with leaders of the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America (BPFNA) at a training conference on conflict transformation in Thailand, sponsored by Asian Baptists. In late night meetings at the conference they laid the foundation for a new peacemaking strategy.

V.K. Nuh and Wati Aier began contacting the various faction leaders, and in July, 1997 three of the four factions (the group that did not attend was NSCN-IM, the IM referring to Isak and Muivah, the leaders of the group) met in Atlanta along with some other political and communal leaders. The BPFNA, led by Ken Sehested and Dan Buttry, hosted the talks which culminated in a jointly-agreed upon statement calling for a cease-fire, for Naga unity and pursuit of peace. The

official Naga Baptist bodies did not publicly endorse the Atlanta meetings, but V.K. Nuh and Wati Aier were both leaders of stature among the Baptists.

During the Atlanta talks the government of India and the NSCN-IM agreed to a three-month cease-fire to facilitate political talks at the highest levels in a third neutral country. However, following the Atlanta talks violence increased as the cease-fire did not encompass all parties, especially between the factions. The NSCN-IM condemned the Atlanta talks and the church leaders who had participated in them. However, Wati Aier doggedly continued to communicate through convoluted channels with that faction, asking for a face-to-face meeting with Isak and Muivah. That November they agreed to meet, and Wati Aier and Dan Buttry of the BPFNA met for three days with them. At the end of those talks they secured the first cease-fire in over twenty years of intra-Naga fighting. The cease-fire was informal and it was only for four days, but it was a start.

The four days of the cease-fire were for the celebration of 125th Anniversary of the coming of Christianity to the Nagas, observed in late November, 1997. During a powerful prayer service in which over 100,000 Nagas were gathered, the fervent desire for peace was expressed. The fervor of those moments turned that informal four-day cease-fire into one that lasted over a year and a half, and still continues to put a damper on small violent flare-ups. The cease-fires with the government of India were periodically renewed and extended to the remaining groups, sometimes with bilateral agreements and sometimes unilaterally declared by India.

**Democratization of the Peace Process**

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The formal cease-fires and commitment to political talks between the insurgents and the government of India and the informal cease-fires between the Naga factions broadened the social space for the democratization of the peace process. Mass-based organizations and the churches now had a more conducive context in which to raise their voices and act. The next major step in the movement was sparked by the Indian parliamentary elections. Many Naga community leaders were calling for a boycott of the elections, which they saw as a legitimization of the incorporation of the Nagas into the Indian nation-state. However, leading Naga insurgents were threatening to assassinate people who participated in the election. So the Wati Aier and BPFNA leaders convened a meeting outside India with Muivah, who had threatened the violence, and the General Secretary of the Naga Baptist Church Council. An agreement was reached to not engage in any violence related to the election, but that the churches would lead in a nonviolent boycott calling for a genuine solution to the Naga situation. The insurgents laid low while the churches held prayer meetings followed by massive boycotts and the display of white flags and banners for peace. The boycott was 85 percent effective, revealing the lack of public support for the Nagas participating in the Indian state government of Nagaland.

Further mediation efforts to build unity among the Nagas, particularly the opposing factions, stalled. Many church and civic sector groups shuttled between the factional leaders. Later consultative meetings were held between the mass-based organizations and the various resistance groups. Violence was restrained, but nothing the peacemaking groups could do would bring the insurgent leaders to the table. So a different approach was tried: mobilizing the community groups for more assertive action.

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In 1999 Dan Buttry twice traveled to India to hold extensive training and strategizing workshops with leaders of the Baptist churches and various peoples organizations such as the Naga People's Movement for Human Rights, the Naga Mothers Association and the Naga Student Federation. Besides learning peace-building skills, there was a need for building trust between the older church leaders and the critical student activists. As they listened, shared stories, engaged in team-building exercises and ate together a sense of unity and common commitment grew. The isolation built up by years of fear and military repression was overcome. By the end of the second workshop the participants engaged in planning which resulted in launching "The Journey of Conscience".

**Journey of Conscience**

Initially this was a three-day event in Delhi. A delegation of Naga church leaders, human rights activists, leaders of various civic organizations and two choirs from a seminary and a Christian college traveled by train from Nagaland to the Indian capital. Once in Delhi the delegation held a conference with Indian human rights groups, academics, journalists and retired politicians. The conference presented the Naga plight and provided an opportunity for dialog between Nagas and the general India public about what was happening and various hopes for the future. On the second day the delegation visited Gandhi's tomb to lay a wreath and pray, making public statements about Gandhi's support of Naga independence and their desire for a peaceful solution to the conflict. The final day was taken up with a march and rally in downtown Delhi with various Naga activists calling for justice and peace.

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The response of many in the Indian activist community was surprise and affirmation. Nagas had been portrayed as savages, and until the Journey of Conscience most of the publicity about the conflict was about the violence of the insurgents. Because of the geographic remoteness of the Naga areas in relation to the rest of India most of the Indian public had only a dim awareness of the conflict if any at all. Many Indian activists and organizations accepted an invitation from Journey of Conscience leaders to visit Nagaland and see for themselves what was happening. Public events were held during the Nagaland visit, and a joint statement was issued from the Indian and Naga participants calling for a negotiated political settlement. One insurgent leader was delightfully astonished at the statement as this was the first time major Indian voices had been raised on behalf of a just and peaceful solution. He praised the Naga civil society groups for what they had accomplished through their nonviolent campaign.

Since the beginning of the Journey of Conscience campaign Naga activists have been connected to outside organizations and educational institutions such as Training for Change and Eastern Mennonite University to refine their skills in conflict transformation and grassroots education. Leaders in the mass-organizations have engaged in wide-spread training of Naga church members, students and women's groups in various dimensions of peace-building. Occasionally the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America and the Quaker Peace and Social Witness Group from the United Kingdom has helped with further training and consultation, but now the Naga activists have their own skill, experience and intellectual base for taking strong and creative action. A Naga activist and a BPFNA trainer provided training in negotiation for Naga resistance leaders so they could effectively and appropriately participate in political discussions with the government of India.

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The coalition of Naga civil society groups has also designed programs to give more international visibility to the Nagas and their situation. Cultural programs have been produced and held in various countries. International advocacy campaigns have been launched to urge India to repeal the Armed Forces Special Powers Act which gives legal license to the human rights abuses of the Indian Army in Nagaland and the neighboring state of Manipur. Videos have been produced by both Naga organizations and a sympathetic Indian film producer to give wider publicity to what is going on. As a result these efforts are breaking through the barriers of silence and isolation of the Nagas which had allowed India to act with impunity in the region.

The negotiation process between the government of India and the Naga insurgent leaders continues to be a faltering but continuing affair. The Naga resistance groups remain at odds with each other, though violence is rare. The public voices for peace, respect of human rights and a just settlement of the conflict are much stronger and more cogent both from the Naga side and from within India. This public assertiveness has put more pressure on Indian and Naga political leaders to move forward on the peace agenda and not to fall back on taking military action. The slow progress of political talks could deflate the energy of the civil society organizations, but the theological ferment related to peacemaking coming out of the churches, the passion of youthful leadership, and the continuing status of concrete targets for activist strategies such as the Special Powers Act have so far helped sustain the activist momentum.

**To Conclude**

There are some dynamics seen in the Naga struggle which might be witnessed in other contexts. The institutional church has been generally supportive of peacemaking initiatives, but the

institutional leaders have sometimes exhibited caution to the point of not taking the lead at key turning points. Individuals from among the church leadership have acted on their own, such as Wati Aier, taking courageous action when the institutional leadership would formally hold back. The leadership of these key individuals was critical at many points along the way. Most if not all of the secular community organizations were led by Baptists whose values were shaped in the context of the churches; so though they acted from the organizational base of human rights, women and student groups, much of their personal perspectives and motivations were fed by their faith. At critical points the churches as religious bodies or through their recognized leadership did join in the actions, which gave a huge boost of social credibility and power to the movement actions. Baptist churches are not hierarchical, so leadership emerging out of the community of faith rather than mainly from the top of the denominational organization is consistent with Baptist ecclesiology.

Developing the skill base and ability for critical analysis and thinking was a major part of the growth of the movement. Bringing outside trainers into Nagaland and sending key leaders to established educational institutions and organizations helped to build the leadership resources for the Naga groups. Outside groups for the most part avoided paternalism in presuming to tell the Nagas what they should do. Instead they provided catalytic support and tools for the Nagas to do their own work in analyzing their situation and strategizing for how best to address the problems. This led to greater confidence in the emerging Naga leaders and healthy solidarity partnerships with outside groups.

As of this writing the conflict is unresolved, but many of the dynamics are moving in a positive direction. The lessons learned along the way by the churches and community organizations have

provided a solid foundation for them to make significant contributions to the eventual settlement of the conflict.

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## 10.2 The Pastor and the Imam: Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum - Nigeria

***In recent years, Nigeria has been plagued with alarming frequency by violence between its Muslim and Christian communities. One of the worst hit regions has been Kaduna State. The co-founders and national coordinators of the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum of Kaduna in 1995 are two men with deep roots in the opposing communities, both of whom have turned away from violence and militancy and instead embraced nonviolence, reconciliation, and the advocacy of peaceful relations between their communities.***

Once they were bitter rivals, but now they consider themselves brothers. In fact, at one time, they each tried to have the other killed. James Wuye and Muhammad Ashafa are living proof though that people can change, and that the urge for revenge can be replaced by an urge to foster reconciliation and peaceful co-existence. Pastor James Wuye readily acknowledges that he was a militant in his youth. For that, he paid a price — he lost his arm during this struggle of communal violence in 1992. Imam Muhammad Nurayn Ashafa was a militant as well. During that same eruption of unrestrained violence in 1992, he lost his teacher and two sons. For both men, coming to terms with terrible loss forced reflection, and reflection brought transformation.

*"Both began to question the cost of violence and turned to the Bible and the Koran, where they found passages showing commonalities between Islam and Christianity and calling on believers to be peacemakers,"* writes Christian Science Monitor reporter Mike Crawley. Yet, "*when the pair first met face to face in 1995, distrust lingered. At the urging of a civil society leader, they*

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*agreed to try to work out some sort of understanding, and they say the resulting dialogue helped them to overcome stereotypes and misconceptions and gain respect for each other."*

They staged a public debate — no easy task in such a charged atmosphere — and this early effort at dialogue has since become an ongoing exchange through the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum.

Each of them has made a quantum leap — from violent youth leader to successful non-violent mediator of Muslim-Christian conflicts. Now, they listen to the each other's sermons. In fact, together they have published a book, *The Pastor and the Imam: Responding to Conflict*, which examines the perceptions of Muslim and Christian about each other, explores the commonalities at the root of the two faiths — and the differences — and then describes the efforts, at first tenuous and later more confident, to forge a common effort to promote understanding between the communities.

**Intercommunal Violence**

Kaduna State is the seat of Nigeria's northern elite, including senior military, religious and traditional figures. Its population of approximately 3.5 million is divided more or less equally between Muslims and Christians. Kaduna has also, unfortunately, been at the epicenter of inter-communal conflict — conflict that has only been worsened since the Kaduna State government's declaration of its intent to introduce Shariah law. This declaration sparked an outbreak of violence in late February 1999, and subsequent anti-Muslim reprisals in various southern towns,

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which left an estimated 2,000 people dead, 80,000 displaced and many private homes and business premises looted and destroyed.

With its mix of ethnic and religious groups, Kaduna continues to be one of the most conflict-prone states in the country. The various communities compete for a greater share of the limited socio-economic resources and for political power, each feeling itself politically and economically marginalized. In that environment, religion is, in a sense "perverted" as it is invoked in the political arena, and youth are exploited by those who seek to gain personally from the conflict.

**A Myriad of Contributing Factors**

Ethnic and religious differences have been a source of tension throughout Nigeria's turbulent post-independence history, which has been marked by decades of military rule. The third and most recent attempt at instituting democracy in the federal republic has been underway since 1999.

Pastor Wuye stresses that during the long periods of military rule, ethnic and religious tensions have tended to increase. Official appointments to federal posts have often been made on the basis of patronage as opposed to merit, which has favored Muslim northerners who have been quite dominant in the Nigerian military. Thus, Christian clerics have preached against what they perceived to be injustice in the trend of federal government appointments under military regimes. Another factor that has contributed to Nigeria's ethnic tensions has beenthe country's poor progress towards economic development. In spite of its abundant petroleum and natural gas reserves, the United Nations Development Program ranked Nigeria as 151st of 174 countries evaluated in terms of human development. Imam Ashafa also notes that when the bubble that

was Nigeria's oil economy burst in the 1980s, there was an apparently related increase in ethnic conflicts with religious undertones.

In view of such linkages, observes Pastor Wuye, one can reasonably conclude that "most of the problems in Nigeria do not come from religion but economics and social conditions."

**Multi-Track Approach**

Imam Ashafa and Pastor Wuye share a view that civil society organizations - such as the Interfaith Mediation Centre, which they set up - can do a better job of defusing potentially violent situations in Nigeria than security forces. According to Pastor Wuye, the Interfaith Mediation Centre uses a multi-track approach to address issues of intercommunal violence. "We 'deprogram' people by making them aware of what the other side is thinking."

The project that the two men launched, which consists of both the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum and the Inter-Faith Mediation Centre, aims to prevent the recurrence of violent conflict and to contribute to an increase in the level of trust and tolerance between Christians and Muslims in Kaduna State. With trust, tolerance and an absence of violence, reconciliation can begin, through the development over time of collaborative relationships and cohesive peace constituencies in both communities. At the same time, as such reconciliation takes root, the communities' capacity to resolve conflicts will also be enhanced.

Five specific objectives have been identified:

. To re-establish relationships which have been damaged due to recurring violence over the last five years.

. To minimize the reoccurrence of violence amongst various groups in the community.

. To initiate programs and projects that requires and encourages the involvement of Christians and Muslims (including dialogue, workshops, cultural events and the establishment of a resource center).

. To enhance inter-religious relationships and co-operation within the State.

. To support and build the capacity of local partners who are involved in peacemaking.

The Centre organizes a range of activities to bring together religious leaders, policy makers, technocrats, small business owners and traders, grassroots participants including women, youth and religious leaders, and other stakeholders. The inclusion of women is especially important because of the role women play in educating children at home. Engaging youth is vital because it is youth, in fact, who are often the perpetrators of violence (Nigerians, observes Pastor Wuye, tend to be fiercely passionately about their faith. For many Nigerian youths, religion is everything. He draws an important distinction — that one can be "religious" without being "godly"). Because operators of businesses and traders have a vested interest in peace and stability in the community, they are viewed as valuable potential partners in the peace and reconciliation process.

Some of the activities that take place include programs focusing on dialogue among the various constituencies; intensive problem solving workshops for women and youth groups; annual cultural events; capacity building training programs for local community leaders and members of civil society; and programs designed to address the trauma that citizens have suffered as a result of the violence.

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One of the most significant achievements of the centre has been the drafting of the *Kaduna Peace Declaration*, which is an articulation of a common vision to put in place effective machinery appropriate for building and sustaining long-term peaceful co-existence between the Christian and Muslim communities. The document was carefully formulated so as to be broadly acceptable and realistic in its goals, and the potential signers were encouraged to review together with their constituents. In August 2002, some twenty senior religious leaders signed the Kaduna Peace Declaration and declared that each year, August 22 would be observed as *Peace Day* in Kaduna State.

**Impact**

Since the signing of the Kaduna Peace Declaration grassroots efforts to maintain peace have continued, but the challenges have remained as well. Any incident runs the risk of turning into a crisis. In November 2002, for example, protests over a newspaper article connecting the prophet Mohammed to the Miss World beauty pageant caused much tension. Both Pastor James and Imam Ashafa in union with transformed religious leaders drove around affected neighborhoods on a bus and arranged to have them appear on television to appeal for calm. The intervention only, was made possible because of the commitments made in the Kaduna Peace Declaration, which was an important factor in containing a volatile situation.

Religious leaders who have signed the declaration are also credited with helping to control violence and vote rigging during elections at both the State and Federal levels. In addition, they have, on numerous occasions, intervened in conflicts in the schools, when minor arguments threatened to turn into major incidents. Indeed, some instigators are intent on using schools as a

breeding ground for religious conflict. To stem this tide, The Interfaith Mediation Centre, in collaboration with signers of the Kaduna Peace Declaration, has embarked on a program to provide conflict resolution training to religious instructors and secondary school officials.

**Other Approaches**

The consultative approach of the Centre stands in stark contrast to the approach of the federal Nigerian government, which has attempted to achieve peace by viewing conflict, especially in Kaduna, as a question of law and order. This has systematically failed and attracted international criticism. On the other hand, at the state level, it can be said that the Kaduna state government has played a somewhat more constructive role. It has tried to transform the conflict in the region through rudimentary arbitration and mediation methods utilizing official "track one" approaches — governmental agencies and government sponsored dialogue. Such efforts have changed the conflict's dynamics but not contributed to resolving it; nonetheless, Kaduna State's efforts have been somewhat promising in view of the fact that the state has attempted to address the fundamental structural causes of the conflicts. This work has been informed by intensive research and consultation with local partners, especially the Kaduna Peace Committee, an organization with extensive knowledge of the conflict dynamics and issues at stake in Kaduna and the greater north, and familiarity with parties to the conflicts.

One other important result of the cooperation between Imam Ashafa and Pastor Wuye has been a successful initiative to bring together two warring communities of Plateau State, the nomadic Fulani cattle rearers and the native Beroms. To settle longstanding disputes, Imam Ashafa and Pastor Wuye arranged to hold talks and actively facilitated a mediation process. In 2003, the two

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parties made a start on engaging in a healing process and exploring pragmatic solutions to the conflict.

Overall, Imam Ashafa and Pastor Wuye have successfully facilitated dozens of conflict resolution activities. Whereas their efforts were once confined to their hometown of Kaduna, they are increasingly working in other regions as well. Through its perseverance, the Interfaith Mediation Centre has gathered the strength to break free from one-time interventions and extend its reach and influence across Nigeria.

**Lessons Learned**

For Imam Ashafa and Pastor Wuye, it has been a long and difficult journey, from outright animosity, to cautious steps to get to know each other — still holding to much suspicion and mistrust — to trust and acceptance, and finally to cooperation. Imam Ashafa and Pastor Wuye have come to see, by engaging in dialogue, that they, as believers in their faith, are more similar than dissimilar. The greatest threat to peaceful co-existence, they see, comes not as a result of cultural or religious difference, but from ignorance of the humanity that binds people together.

*"Erroneous perceptions affecting Christian-Muslim relationships have been a source of commotion and tears,"* they write in The Pastor and the Imam**.** *"They have bred assumptions, stereotypes, and suspicions. As long as we insist on passing judgment on others by the verdict of our perceptions, and refuse them opportunity to explain … to us who and what they are, we are creating room for conflict in our inter-personal and inter-religious relationships."*

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The refreshing, if simple, discovery of the Pastor and the Imam is that they can draw strength and inspiration from the very faith that is so central to their lives, by looking to the messages of Jesus Christ and the prophet Mohammed, to eschew conflict and violence and instead pursue justice, love, and peaceful co-existence.

**<Box>**

**A surprising meeting of minds**

We both, in the past, had been involved in a war of words through various publications … In these papers we expressed radical, provocative ideas from the stand points of our religions, on which we would refuse to negotiate for any reason. These uncompromising attitudes, in the past, had resulted in a tense atmosphere that did not allow room for dialogue or for any form of interaction between us. Everyone was trying to outwit the other. To the Pastor, the goal was total evangelization of the country, while for the Imam it was total Islamization. These were our positions before that fateful meeting and introduction.

Then we started talking, each of us carefully selecting his words, We were conscious that here were two "enemies" coming face to face for the first time, on a ground that was not conducive to flexing of muscles. But in our eyes, one could read hatred, anger and resentment, all covered with the cynical smiles that frequently flashed across our faces. Each was highly suspicious of the other.

To our very great surprise, as this discussion progressed, we were both startled by some discoveries. Hidden behind the turbaned Imam was a gentleman, not the violent man that the Pastor had assumed he was. Similarly, the suited Pastor was a bird of the same feather as the Imam. We found that we had a lot of things in common. From this, the idea of collaborative

problem solving was initiated. At the end of that meeting we resolved to meet again to further harness this idea of responding to our conflicts.

From: *The Pastor and the Imam*

**<End Box>**

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## 10.3 Step by Step on the Way to Peace: Dhammayietra Peace Walk in Cambodia

***Though a formal Peace Treaty was signed in 1991, conflict in Cambodia continued and the Cambodian people continued to suffer. In 1992, a number of local and foreign peace activists initiated the first Dhammayietra peace walk — literally, a Pilgrimage of Truth. It has taken place around the time of the Cambodian New Year every year since then. Villagers along the way see the Walk and the gradual return of Buddhism and Buddhist monks as a sign that peace is real, despite the continued hardships that are a result of the war.***

*"We must find the courage to leave our temples and enter the temples of human experience, temples that are filled with suffering. If we listen to the Buddha, Christ, or Gandhi, we can do nothing else. The refugee camps, the prisons, the ghettoes, and the battlefields will them become our temples."* Maha Ghosananda

On March 22, 2004, a group of 140 monks, lay people, and volunteers concluded a 6-kilometer hike up a steep rocky trail and climbed the steps of Preah Vihear, a mountaintop temple in northern Cambodia. They had just completed a 21-day 375-kilometer walk through the Cambodian countryside — the fourteenth Dhammayietra for peace and understanding. The youngest walkers were just fourteen. The oldest was a 77 year-old man named Dom Chem. All were united by the aim of the pilgrimage, "to promote awareness of the five precepts of

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Buddhism and to promote the ideals of compassion, loving kindness, generosity, honesty and tolerance".

The Dhammayietra was inspired and originally led by Somdet Phra Maha Ghosananda, one of Cambodia's most respected Buddhist monks, who has continued to serve as its spiritual leader. In a nation devastated by the horrors of the Pol Pot regime and beaten down and discouraged by years and years of war, that first Dhammayietra in 1992 was a spectacular success. Thousands of Cambodians spontaneously joined the pilgrims along the route leading to Phnom Penh, and tens of thousands more gathered to urge the walkers on as they passed through provincial seats along the way. It attracted significant media coverage, with one result being that the world was confronted with Cambodia's suffering. Each year since then, a group of private citizens has walked through the Cambodian countryside on what is considered to be both a physical and a spiritual pilgrimage, traversing war zones and mine fields, subject to blistering heat and monsoon rains. Often, the crowds have included soldiers, who have laid down their weapons, offered prayers for the marchers, and provided the pilgrims with food and water.

These pilgrims come from all religions, nationalities, and backgrounds, united only by a commitment to peace and truth. Although the Dhammayietra is not, strictly speaking, a religious procession, the Dhammayietra walks are a very specific application of Buddhist teachings on the linkage between spiritual awareness and non-violent conflict resolution. Maha Ghosananda, who is often referred to as the "Gandhi of Cambodia", notes that the Dhammayietra tradition dates back over 2,500 years.

Maha Ghosananda is a firm believer in the power of compassion. Reconciliation, he believes, flows forth from a deep-rooted sense of compassion — not just to wish to leave the struggle

behind, so to speak, but to embrace the humanity of the adversary, the victim, the perpetrator, and indeed, of all people. "It is a law of the universe that retaliation, hatred, and revenge only continue the cycle and never stop it," he has said.

"Reconciliation does not mean that we surrender rights and conditions, but rather that we use love. Our wisdom and our compassion must walk together. Having one without the other is like walking on one foot; you will fall. Balancing the two, you will walk very well, step by step."

**Training Programs**

The Dhammayietra is both physically and mentally grueling. Therefore, all participants prepare for the lengthy walk by attending non-violence training programs at one of several locations in Cambodia. The first sessions at these training programs are taken up with fundamentals: the philosophy of the walk, an introduction on meditation for peace, and an understanding of how basic Buddhist concepts can be applied to the difficulties of everyday life. There are also sessions on peacemaking, the theory and application of nonviolence, strategies for handling fear, and role-playing sessions to familiarize participants with potential situations they might encounter during the walk. Because of the serious risks of injury from unexploded mines, the training also includes sessions on mine awareness, provided by non-governmental agencies. Such training not only prepares the walkers for the Dhammayietra itself, but also creates a large network of individuals trained in nonviolent action and theory, capable of passing that knowledge on to other members of their own communities. Over the years, thousands of people have attended nonviolence training sessions. One of the enduring benefits of the Dhammayietra

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has been the development of this network, which extends not only throughout Cambodia, but to neighboring countries as well, and with many international participants, around the globe.

**Philosophical Underpinnings**

The central value that is the key to both the power and the success of the Dhammayietra is compassion to which Maha Ghosananda eloquently refers, viewed from a Buddhist perspective as both the means and the end of personal and social liberation. Compassion is considered to be the one virtue that enables peacemakers to persist in nonviolent action when confronted with violence and frustration. To quote from a poem by Maha Ghosananda,

"Great compassion makes a peaceful heart, a peaceful heart makes a peaceful person, a peaceful person makes a peaceful family, a peaceful family makes a peaceful community, a peaceful community makes a peaceful nation, and a peaceful nation makes a peaceful world."

While members of the Dhammayietra movement recognize that the development of compassion is a long-term process, they offer several lessons from Buddhist practice as strategies that can be useful in cultivating it. Compassion serves as a defense against fear, which is seen as a precursor to violence.

As a corollary to the cultivation of compassion, the Dhammayietra philosophy advocates the cultivation of "active mindfulness". By this it is meant that when an individual is confronted with a difficult situation, he or she is capable of either quickly acting — or not acting, if that is more appropriate — with clarity of mind, based on one's own knowledge, experience, and understanding, rather than reacting to and being controlled by that situation.

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If these two qualities are aspired to for the individual participants of a Dhammayietra, the quality that is essential to guarantee the integrity and credibility of the group process is non-partisanship. In Buddhist terminology, the Dhammayietra treads the "Middle Path". The Dhammayietra is making a statement for peace and nonviolence, and against policies, strategies, and actions that lead to violence, but that stance does not imply that it is opposing one side or another in a violent conflict. The position of the Dhammayietra is a clear expression of Gandhi's admonition to "oppose the evil, not the evil doer."

**New Issues**

The Dhammayietra is an expression of commitment to non-violence, but it is also a complicated ongoing event, and it thus requires order, discipline, and logistical planning. In the first years of the Cambodian Dhammayietras, the ideal itself was considered strong enough to assure discipline and success, but in response to difficulties encountered along the way, an organizational structure developed.

Overall coordination was placed in the hands of a small committee consisting of Cambodian monks, nuns, and lay people (in earlier years a smaller committee including expatriates coordinated the walks). The participants were divided into groups of about ten walkers, each with a group leader selected by the members. These leaders participated in meetings with the walk committee to assure a democratic decision-making process. Other members of each group were designated to serve as assistants and representatives, with responsibilities for the distribution of essential supplies, food, water and information.

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Perhaps the most important provision introduced after the first few walks was a set of guidelines for participants. These stipulated that walkers would attend the pre-walk non-violence training and refrain from riding in vehicles, using drugs, carrying weapons, wearing uniforms, or carrying flags.

Beginning with the fourth Dhammayietra in 1995, walk organizers incorporated a public education element. This included the distribution of pamphlets, dissemination of a "Peace Health" message articulating the belief among health workers that war "is the number one health problem in Cambodia," and public talks at villages along the route of the walk. At these talks, Maha Ghosananda would spread his message that Buddhism can serve as a basis for social reconciliation and compassion. Such events also provided opportunities for landmine awareness trainers to make presentations to local residents.

As the threat of civil war has receded somewhat, the Dhammayietras have increasingly focused on a range of other issues besides peace and nonviolence. In 1995, for example, the focus was on the international campaign to ban landmines, and in 1996, attention was directed to the environment, and particularly the need to preserve Cambodia's forests, which are an important symbol of renewal in Buddhism, and vital to country's environmental health. Unfortunately, Cambodia's rich timber resources have suffered as combatants during the Cambodian civil war exploited them as a source of income. Accordingly, during the 1996 walk, thousands of trees were planted along the route.

The urgent issues of HIV/AIDS and drug addiction have also been important themes over the past several years. Dhammayietra 14, for example, focused on the need to nurture tolerance and compassion for people living with HIV/AIDS.

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**A Risky Endeavor**

Although nonviolent action is undertaken in the hope that a principled commitment to nonviolence can provide a degree of protection for participants, nonviolent action in a climate of violence remains a risky endeavor. This was vividly and tragically demonstrated during the Dhammayietras of 1993 and 1994. The first Dhammayietra in 1992 had succeeded beyond its organizers' expectations. Walkers had begun the Dhammayietra in refugee camps on the Thai side of the Thai-Cambodian border, and had walked to Phnom Penh. As a result of the walk, many refugees had been reunited with family members they had not seen since the 1970s, and the walk had succeeded — at least for a time — in breaking through the insidious climate of fear that pervaded the society.

But at the beginning of the second Dhammayietra, from Siem Reap in the north of the country to Phnom Penh, several walkers were wounded when they were caught in a crossfire between government forces and Khmer Rouge fighters. Walkers also braved ongoing shelling which, though not directed at the walk, occurred on a daily basis along the first part of the route. The walk continued nonetheless, and by the time it reached the capital, the total number of participants had swelled to about 3,000.

The following year, with a fragile coalition between former combatants in place in Phnom Penh after UN-supervised elections, the organizers elected to walk from Battambang to Siem Reap — directly through a region of the country where the civil war still raged. Their hope was to maintain "a zone of peace" around the walk. On the seventh day of the Dhammayietra, the

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walkers were accompanied by unarmed soldiers who were showing them a mine-free route, and as they walked, they encountered other armed soldiers conducting military patrols.

"Suddenly," wrote American participant Liz Bernstein, "the walkers encountered a group of [Khmer Rouge] soldiers and a fire fight ensued. Bullets and rockets flew as the walkers lay on the ground." The Dhammayietra had once again been caught in a crossfire, and this time two walkers were killed. Following this incident, there was considerable confusion about whether or not the walk would continue, and some organizers and participants left the walk, while others continued, by an alternate route, to the end.

After the sobering experience of 1994, organizers redoubled their efforts to provide adequate training to participants and to ensure that no soldiers would accompany the Dhammayietra. Since the tragic events of 1994, the Dhammayietra has been completed each year without violence.

**Accomplishments**

Still, in view of the deaths and injuries that have occurred, and the ever-present risk, it is fair to ask what, if anything, is accomplished by the Dhammayietra. Canadian anthropologist, Monique Skidmore, observed the Dhammayietra was a "new cultural ritual of remembering," and that "through the creation of new collective memories it will allow some Cambodians to emerge from the culture of violence created by the last twenty years of war". Australian nonviolence trainers, Robert Burrowes and George Lakey, both believe that the Dhammayietras build "nonviolent solidarity" between the participants who pass through zones of conflict and the local people who must endure the suffering caused by violence. Such solidarity, writes Yeshua Moser-

Puangsuwan, of the Southeast Asia office of Non-violence International, "further generates awareness of, and support for grassroots initiatives to halt the war. It also generates solidarity actions by grassroots activists in other parts of the world." Moser-Puangsuwan believes that in this way the Dhammayietra can serve as a model for nonviolent struggle in other parts of the world.

Since 1999, the prime mover behind the walks has been SyVorn, a 44-year-old woman who notes that she has lived through many regimes and many wars. "Many people, especially government officials, ask why do we still have Dhammayietras?" says SyVorn, "Cambodia has peace now, they say."

"But I ask them, has the war in our hearts really ended? Everyday we fight over money, food, power, etc. We get angry about this and that. Our hearts are not yet peaceful. We've walked for over ten years now yet our hearts haven't learned to be at peace. Dhammayietra is not waiting for the next war to begin but comes now to spread information everywhere and to call all to a change of heart, a Khmer heart, a soft, kind, gentle heart."

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## 10.4 Restoring the Power of Speech: The REHMI Initiative in Guatamala

***Even before the formal end of Guatemala's long civil war, a project was launched, at the initiation of the Catholic Church, to document the abuses committed by both sides. Thousands of interviews were conducted and reported to the nation, with the view that it was essential to know what happened in order to avoid repeating history.***

From the early 1960s until the last days of 1996, Guatemala was consumed by a civil war of unspeakable cruelty. In its essence, the war pitted left-wing guerrillas against a right-wing elite. Particularly during the early 1980s, Guatemala's security forces engaged in a campaign of terror and intimidation against the agrarian, mostly indigenous Mayan peasants who were viewed as sympathetic to the leftist insurgency. Starting in the early 1990s, the warring parties began a dialogue, which led, ultimately to the formal end of the war on December 29, 1996. The war had involved untold horrors, and left deep scars. Getting to the truth of those horrors has been an essential part of the healing process still underway in Guatemala.

In 1994, during the process that led to the final peace settlement, the two sides agreed to establish a Commission for Historical Clarification (Comisión de Esclarimiento Histórica – CEH), which would begin its work after the final peace agreement went into effect. However, the CEH mandate was too weak to serve as a vehicle for meaningful reconciliation. For one thing, CEH was only given six months to investigate the crimes committed during thirty-six years of fighting, with the possibility of one six-month extension. Furthermore, CEH had no power to subpoena witnesses and it was not supposed to ascribe individual responsibility or to name names, but only to clarify the disputed history of Guatemala's recent past. Its influence was

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further undermined by the extension of a general amnesty covering all but the most egregious crimes (genocide, forced disappearance, and torture). Not surprisingly, then, CEH was strongly criticized by elements within civil society.

**An Alternative Force**

From the 1960s on, Guatemala's Roman Catholic Church had been a strong advocate for social justice and respect for human rights, issuing pastoral letters in which the causes of armed conflict were traced to the extreme poverty of the Guatemalan peasantry and the absence of democracy. In 1995, in response to the widespread criticism of CEH, the Office of Human Rights of the Archbishop of Guatemala launched the Project for the Reconstruction of a Historical Memory in Guatemala (*Proyecto de Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica*, or REMHI). It was initially seen as a project that would provide information to CEH, but according to REMHI Project team member Carlos Martín Beristain, "REMHI developed into an alternative force complementing what the official commission was able to do."

Whereas CEH was interested primarily in objectively documenting the events that had taken place, REMHI had been established "based on the conviction that the political repression had wiped out the population's power of speech." According to Martín Beristain, "survivors and their relatives had been unable to share their experience, come to an understanding about what had happened, or denounce those responsible." Giving the victims and survivors of the war the opportunity to tell their stories was crucial to the healing process. Perhaps more significantly, clearly documenting Guatemala's painful past could help to insure that the cruelty of the previous thirty-six years would never be repeated.

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**Four Phases**

The REMHI project would consist of four distinct phases. The first phase, which lasted for a little less than a year, familiarized the nation with the project and the need to afford victims the opportunity to tell their stories. The Church took advantage of its unique position in Guatemalan society to sensitize parishioners to the importance of the work, and also publicized the aims of the project in the media.

The second phase of the project was, in a sense, the heart of the project – the taking of testimonies from thousands of citizens. These were primarily victims, but in some cases, perpetrators as well.

Phase three of the project involved compiling and analyzing the testimonies and producing a report.

The final phase, which is ongoing, involves dissemination of the report findings, and extensive follow-up, including activities to address and ameliorate the trauma caused by the human rights abuses committed during the war. Phase four has also involved exhumations of mass graves to allow for both the gathering of forensic evidence and the ceremonial reburial of the victims.

**Methodology**

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The REMHI project recruited 800 church workers from around the country to take testimonies, and organized workshops to provide training in interviewing techniques. Some of the training was technical — the use of tape recorders, for example, but another important aspect of the training involved the preparation of trainers for the intensely emotional impact that a testimony could have on the interviewee. An important criteria for selection was the ability to gain the trust and confidence of the interviewees; where possible, the interviewers were drawn from people within the local communities.

The REMHI team consulted with international human rights organizations, experts on international law, and forensic scientists and devised a methodology based on methods that had been used in the past by human rights organizations researching reports of abuse. REMHI's intention was to document the full range of experiences of the witnesses. Many had themselves been tortured or physically abused, had lost family members to executions or massacres, survived attempted killings, or witnessed abuses. Beyond that, many had been forced from their homes, survived as internal refugees in the mountains, or fled the country.

Since the primary purpose of the exercise was to "recover memory", rather than to tally statistics about the Human Rights abuses, the team decided that the primary tool in the process would be the tape recorder. "We in the communities said we weren't interested in the dead," one REMHI associate told Paul Jeffrey, the author of *Recovering Memory*, a book which examines - among other Church initiatives in Guatemala - the REMHI experience in detail.

"*We didn't want to know that there were a 100,000 people tortured. That didn't interest us. We wanted to know what we needed to know in order to know what to do afterward with the people*

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*… On the tape would go the voice, the word of the people, not as we interpreted it but as they themselves expressed it … in the language of the people, and people will be able to listen to that in the future. The words will remain alive."*

REMHI distilled the many points of inquiry into a list of seven questions. What happened? When? Where? Who were the people responsible? What effect did this event have on people's lives? What did they do to face up to the situation? Why did they think it happened?

REMHI was not universally supported within the country. There were some, especially within the sizable evangelical Christian community, who felt that the project of recovering memory was a mistake and that it would be better to forgive and forget. Of course, many within the security services and many ex-guerrillas opposed the project as well, for fear of retribution or legal ramifications. On some occasions, military officials issued veiled threats to civilians, warning that they might risk a return to violence if they cooperated. Witnesses were also pressured by guerrilla leaders to withhold any information that might implicate them in abuses.

By the middle of 1997, REMHI had succeeded in taking testimony in most dioceses in Guatemala — more than 6000 interviews conducted in Spanish and seventeen Mayan languages. Most — 92 percent - were with victims, but approximately 500 perpetrators also gave testimony.

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**One More Trauma**

REMHI spent much of the following year compiling the testimonies and writing a four-volume report. Then, on April 24, 1998, Bishop Juan Gerardi Conedera, the driving force behind REMHI, presented *Guatemala: Nunca Más* (Guatemala: Never Again) to the public.

The most important findings presented in the report described the full horrifying range of crimes: information on over 30,000 murders, the identification of 300 mass graves, documentation of 422 massacres, frequent descriptions of sexual violations, and shocking testimony about the murder of children. The report also made clear that the human toll was compounded by the harsh conditions that those who fled their homes confronted; 11 percent of the deaths attributed to the conflict resulted from hunger and exposure — mostly among children — suffered by internal refugees.

Although, as noted above, the goal of REMHI was not to quantify the violence, a few further findings reveal how devastating the conflict in Guatemala was: out of a total population of around 12.5 million (2000 estimate) approximately 150,000 were killed during the war, 50,000 disappeared, one million fled their homes, 200,000 children were orphaned, and 40,000 women were widowed. 90 percent of the victims were men, and nearly 75 percent were indigenous adults. Guatemalan security forces were responsible for the overwhelming majority of the abuses, but guerrillas were not exempt from culpability: insurgents committed 3.7 percent of the massacres.

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Bishop Gerardi clearly viewed the REMHI project through the prism of his pastoral calling, as he spoke at the presentation:

"When we began this project, we were interested in discovering the truth in order to share it. We were interested in reconstructing the history of pain and death, seeing the reasons for it, understanding the why and the how. We wanted to show the human drama and to share with others the sorrow and the anguish of the thousands of dead, disappeared and tortured. We wanted to look at the roots of injustice and the absence of values … Christ's mission is a reconciling one. His presence calls us to be reconcilers in this broken society and to try to place the victims and the perpetrators within the framework of justice. There are people who have died for their beliefs. There are executioners who were often used as instruments. Conversion is necessary, and it's up to us to open spaces to bring about that conversion. It's not enough to just accept facts. It is necessary to reflect on them and to recover the values lost. We are gathering the memories of the people because we want to contribute to the construction of a different country."

Two days after presenting the REMHI report, Bishop Gerardi was brutally murdered. Eventually, after attempts were made to blame the murder on others, three military officers were convicted of the crime.

## Impact

The aims of the REMHI project were mostly therapeutic. In some ways, then, it is far too early to judge its long-term impact. Certainly, those who suffered terrible losses or were the victims of torture and abuse cannot purge their pain simply by providing testimony. Their own comments

on what importance they ascribed to the project and to their testimony suggest something of the potential impact. Witnesses told interviewers that they thought their testimony was important because it would contribute to the discovery and understanding of the truth, that it would dignify the dead, that it would restore the "power of speech" to those who had been effectively silenced, and that the testimony would stand as clear evidence for future generations that it is not possible to erase the collective memory of a people.

Learning the truth about relatives who were murdered has, in some cases, helped to bring a grieving process to closure. Where reburials have occurred, this too, has been important, particularly within Mayan society, where there is a belief that the dead do not leave the community, and so, as Martín Beristain observes, the reinternments "constituted for many people a possible way of re-establishing links which had been destroyed by the violence."

There was also the hope that giving testimony would lead to justice, but in general, this has not been the case. So has REMHI in any way helped to rebuild Guatemalan society or even solidified the footing upon which a new society can be built? Eight years after the end of the conflict, and six and a half years after *Nunca Más* was published, Guatemala is still at peace, and it is at least superficially a functioning democracy. Yet observers ranging from U.S. State Department to Amnesty International to Human Rights Watch decry a discouraging lack of progress toward securing the protection of human rights and the rule of law.

Uruguayan essayist Eduardo Galeano wrote in *La Memoria Subversiva* in *Tiempos: Reencuentro y Esperanza* (quoted by Martín Beristain),

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"Experience demonstrates that it is amnesia which makes history repeat itself over and over like a bad dream. A good memory allows us to learn from the past, because the only reason for recovering the past is to help us transform our present way of life."

REMHI has provided the means by which to banish amnesia from Guatemala's collective consciousness and learn from the past in order to prevent any recurrence of its long nightmare. The risks clearly remain, but in the last few years, positive opportunities for transformation have emerged as well.

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**A long legacy of conflict**

Guatemala's long civil conflict began in the 1950s when Jacobo Arbenz, the left-leaning, democratically elected president, was overthrown in a coup with the covert support of the United States, which saw Arbenz as a potential ally of its Cold War rival the Soviet Union. Arbenz had been attempting to implement reforms, including land reform, to redistribute some of Guatemala's wealth from a tiny elite which controlled about two thirds of the nation's arable land to the poorly educated, rural poor – mostly indigenous Mayans — who made up the vast majority of the population. The 1954 coup installed a military dictatorship which halted the reforms and clamped down on dissent. When a coup to oust the new military rulers failed in 1960, some of the coup leaders launched an insurgency. Government counter-insurgency efforts often targeted not only guerrilla fighters, but civilians as well. Especially in the 1980s, the brutality of the counter-insurgency campaign led to the destruction of at least 440 villages. Approximately 1,000,000 Guatemalans fled their homes.

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In 1986, following elections, Guatemala's military rulers stood down. Following in 1990, with the assistance of the Lutheran World Federation, representatives of the government and the guerrillas began meeting in Oslo, Norway to explored the possibilities of a negotiated settlement. Early on, they signed a "Basic Agreement on the Search for Peace by Political Means", but progress towards a comprehensive settlement was slow, and it took six more years before the civil war in Guatemala was finally ended. On December 29, 1996, the Final Agreement was signed by four guerrilla leaders and four Guatemalan governme nt officials at a ceremony witnessed by 1200 invited guests.

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**The World Conference of Religions for Peace**

Religion sparks violence and impedes efforts to address global problems like terrorism, according to many. In reality, however, religious networks are also working to eliminate terror, prevent and mediate violent conflicts, and aid the world's most vulnerable populations. Civil society is undergoing a fundamental shift in its attitude toward religion and beginning to tap the vast social, moral and spiritual resources of religious communities to tackle the most critical global problems. *The World Conference of Religions for Peace*, the largest coalition of the world's religions committed to common action, is playing a key role in this transformation.

Throughout history, religion has been associated with violent conflict — Jews and Muslims in Palestine, Muslims and Orthodox Christians in the Balkans, Hindus and Buddhists in Sri Lanka, the Judeo-Christian "West" and Muslim extremists in what Western leaders call the "war on terror". While religious intolerance and extremism are often a source of conflict, religion is more often the convenient scapegoat for underlying political and economic tensions, or bad leadership.

With so many bad examples, it is easy to dismiss religion as a source of conflict without considering the demonstrated capacity of different religious communities to work together to promote peace. In some of the most intractable conflicts around the world, religion is part of the solution, not part of the problem.

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*The World Conference of Religions for Peace* has developed a unique *method* and builds effective *mechanisms* specifically designed to help religious communities to cooperate together in the work of transforming conflict.

The *method* developed by *The World Conference of Religions for Peace* is unique, practical, and open to continuous creativity. At its simplest, the method involves assisting religious communities to correlate, or work out a connection, between their capacities for action and specific challenges related to stages of conflict. The method, while simple, is powerful. When applied, it reveals large, often hidden or under-utilized capacities for action that lie within the reach of religious communities. Importantly, the method also makes clear what kinds of capacity building are needed to better equip religious communities for more effective engagements in conflict transformation.

The mechanisms being built by *The World Conference of Religions for Peace* are national and regional multi-religious councils. These action-oriented councils are not themselves religious organizations, but rather, secular or public in character. They are led by religious leaders and designed to provide a platform for cooperative action throughout the different levels of religious communities, from grassroots structures to the senior-most leadership.

The collaborative work of the interreligious councils affiliated with *The World Conference of Religions for Peace* takes many forms. Interreligious councils can bring adversaries together and work to end conflict or rebuild divided societies. Sierra Leone's religious leaders, Muslims and Christians working together, stopped a bloody civil war and mediated negotiations between the government and the rebels. The Inter-religious Council of Liberia was instrumental in President

Taylor's decision to relinquish power and is now working to achieve reconciliation after years of human rights abuse and violence. Through regional coordinating committees of its affiliated interreligious councils in Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Ghana, *The World Conference of Religions for Peace* is working to mitigate and mediate cross border conflicts throughout the region.

No form of cooperation has greater potential to improve conditions for more people worldwide than the cooperation of the world's religious communities. Of the world's six billion people, five billion identify themselves as members of religious communities. The capacity of religious communities to meet the challenges of our time is a vast untapped resource.

*By Dr. William F. Vendley, secretary-general of the World Conference of Religions for Peace (www.religionsforpeace.org).*

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# 11. Education that Makes a Difference

**Tricia S. Jones***

***Perhaps more than ever, there is a need for innovative and successful approaches to developing the defenses of peace in the minds of all humanity. We have witnessed the consequences of not attending to these needs in the many and varied international, interethnic and inter-group conflicts around the globe. Fortunately, there are wonderful programs and practices in the area of conflict resolution education and peace education that have proven effective in building peaceful behavior and peaceful orientations. We know these kinds of education can make a difference. By allowing others to know of the possibilities, we can help sow the seeds of peace.***

*"Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed."*

Preamble of the Constitution of the United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

The cases in this chapter present experiences and successes of conflict and peace educators around the world: in Sierra Leone, India, Lebanon, and the United States. In each of these cases we learn about best practices for conflict resolution and peace education and we come to appreciate the challenges of this work.

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This introduction begins by defining conflict resolution and peace education. Then, several challenges are raised that face these efforts and suggest ways that the cases in this chapter help us see ways to overcome these challenges. Finally, the introduction ends with a brief recommendation of additional work needed in this area.

## Conflict Resolution Education and Peace Education

Conflict resolution education programs focus on developing critical skills and abilities for a person to deal constructively with conflict. In most cases these programs occur in schools, but they may also be used in after-school programs, community centers, church groups, etc.

What do children learn in conflict resolution education? These programs give children an understanding of the nature of conflict – what conflict is and how it develops as well as what you can do to manage it. Children learn to appreciate that conflict exists whenever there is a disagreement about goals and/or methods to achieve those goals; and as a result, conflict is natural, necessary and important. Children learn to understand the dynamics of power and influence that operate in all conflict situations. Furthermore, they become aware of the role of culture in how we see and respond to conflict.

An awareness of the nature of conflict helps children appreciate the variety of ways that people can manage or respond to conflict – another common program component. By learning a range of conflict styles (like competing, collaborating, accommodating, avoiding, and compromising), children can consider the advantages and disadvantages of each. As effective conflict managers know – no approach to conflict management works all the time; the key is to know which

approach is best for the situation. However, conflict resolution education emphasizes that a violent response to conflict is almost never an appropriate response.

An extremely important program component involves providing children with social and emotional skills to prevent conflict and reinforce their use of pro-social strategies in conflict. Some of the skills that conflict resolution education helps develop include effective listening, perspective taking, emotional awareness and emotional control. Of these, perhaps the most important is perspective-taking. When children learn to take the perspective of another they are increasing their ability to empathize with the other person. The more we empathize with someone, the less we are likely to want to hurt them.

The Peace Education Working Group at UNICEF defines peace education as

*"… the process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behavior changes that will enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural; to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, inter-group, national or international level."*

Salomon (2002) states that peace education usually includes such topics as

*"…antiracism, conflict resolution, multiculturalism, cross-cultural training and the cultivation of a generally peaceful outlook".*

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Using the UNICEF definition and Salomon's conclusion, we may consider peace education the larger effort and conflict resolution education as one of the areas within peace education. Sommers (2003) suggests that peace education is best understood in terms of the specific skills, attitudes, and knowledge imparted. Peace education programs help people develop communication skills of active listening and assertive speech; problem solving skills of brainstorming or consensus building; and orientation skills of cultural awareness and empathy. Furthermore peace education builds positive attitudes about justice, respect and democracy, though respect for democracy may be expressed indirectly through respect for individual choice. Peace education emphasizes understanding the dynamics of social conflict, warfare, and understanding conflict resolution and the dynamics of peace. In particular participants in peace education are introduced to the distinctions of negative and positive peace. Participants may learn about different ways of handling conflict, such as negotiation, mediation or facilitation.
A quick perusal of the definition, characteristics, and content of conflict resolution education and peace education programs suggests that both areas overlap considerably. They basic motivations are similar, the goals for programs are similar, and the key skills and content are similar. Sommers (2001) notes that similarities are also shared between peace education and many kinds of "values education programs", such as human rights education, anti-bias training and tolerance education. These all share a commitment to enhancing the quality of life by emphasizing the dignity of life. In all three examples, violence is rejected and participants are encouraged to find alternative ways of handling problems.

**Challenges**

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## Building Community

What does it take to make a constructive, caring community? And how can conflict resolution education and peace education help in that quest? These may be the essential questions of our work.

Most peace educators realize that they have the potential to make a "home" for children by building a caring community. Furthermore, realistically, that means that before anything else can be accomplished, basic physical needs for food, water and shelter must be met, as Emma Kamara and Keith Neal explain in their discussion of the Children's Learning Services in Sierra Leone. Once the physical needs have been met, the children and the community understand the commitment to them and are more receptive to learning peace skills.

Building a community also means emphasizing inclusion in the community and counteracting sources of discrimination. For example, in the SAWA Children's Magazine developed in Lebanon, there was an emphasis on encouraging inclusion and discouraging bias and discrimination based on ethnic and religious difference.

Susan Fountain has worked with many schools to help them develop more positive communities. After working with UNICEF, Creative Response to Conflict, and Educators for Social Responsibility, she has considerable experience. She remembers working with one school:

"*In [one] class they had a student come in the middle of the year when it's very tough to be accepted. The boy who joined was overweight and was fairly young in terms of his social skills. He had extreme learning problems. Kids started to tease and scapegoat him. The parents*

*actually got involved in this as well, even tried to get the kid kicked out of the school. They called him a monster. This developed into a very bad situation. [I] worked with the class, did a lot of group building, cooperative games then moved to exercises on inclusion and exclusion. This provoked some very deep and honest discussion for the kids. They got the kids working in groups together to build acceptance. I used the game where you have kids close their eyes and put a different color sticker on their heads and get into a group with same color. Knowing who the kids were who were at the forefront of the exclusion she allowed these kids to have the experience of having a "different" dot, so they could feel what it's like. This also got some very profound discussions going. Then they moved to doing some role plays about the reasons that kids get excluded in this school – gender, wearing glasses, different preferences, like sports or not. They talked about what the kids could do if they were excluded or as a bystander seeing someone else is excluded."*

After a great deal of work, this school was able to develop a positive and nurturing community. However first the students needed to understand their own dynamics of disrespect and agree to disallow that behavior.

In Ohio, the Students Offering Acceptance and Respect (SOAR) program is a wonderful example of students building a caring and respectful community through anti-bullying programs. When individual students refuse to treat others with respect, it is the responsibility of other members of that community to stand up for them.

Having acknowledged the importance of community and the role of conflict resolution education in creating positive community, what are some of the things that may prevent conflict resolution

education and peace education from achieving maximum benefit in terms of developing constructive and caring communities?

If students, teachers, parents and community members are not given the necessary skills, they will not be able to build community. Providing those tools forces us to face difficult resource issues. Skill development does not happen overnight. There is a learning curve needed for children and adults to learn new skills. Knowledge is only the first step. Without practice, application and review, the new skill will not really be learned.

It seems appropriate to remember that conflict resolution education and peace education programs are most successful when adults model constructive conflict management and caring community for children. We do not want to give the impression that community building efforts are only something that adults should "help children do." It is as important for the adult members of schools and external communities to learn and enact these constructive behaviors for themselves.

However, the challenge of conflict resolution education and peace education programs in terms of building community is different in societies that are experiencing or have recently experienced serious conflict.

Conflict-ridden societies, especially in cases of inter-ethnic conflicts, are more damaged and require more reparation of emotional issues before skills development can be the focus. In conflict-ridden societies the need to provide for the basic safety and security needs of all clearly comes first. Furthermore, once those are secured, the educators may find that normal outlets for education – such as schools or community centers – no longer exist as a place to conduct this important learning.

However the most important realization is that there is a lot of healing that must be done. Children who have experienced serious conflict or war are traumatized and emotionally scarred by that experience. They, and the adults who live with them, need to be helped to manage these emotional wounds. Such work is often an initial focus of peace educators, and it may take many months or even years to overcome the trauma and help the child be ready to move forward in learning peace.

## Connections that Empower

If one tool is good, several tools may be better – especially for complex issues and complex goals. All of the cases presented in this chapter reinforce this wisdom. Perhaps most striking is the example of the Ohio Commission for Dispute Resolution's support of truly comprehensive, school wide, conflict resolution education efforts. The Commission and their model The Winning Against Violent Environments Program (WAVE) and SOAR programs give us insights about how to combine conflict resolution and peace education efforts for optimum sensitivity to the needs of the community or school.

A critical part of any effort is social and emotional learning. When children develop emotional competence, it is integrally intertwined with the development of conflict competence and social competence. If we want our children to be able to manage conflict effectively, we need to appreciate that conflict is an inherently emotional experience. An emotionally traumatized student cannot be an effective manager of their own conflicts and cannot reasonably help others manage their conflicts – as the experience in Sierra Leone so convincingly suggests.

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In addition to the various techniques and materials educators can use to promote social and emotional development, there is a need to value the expressive arts as a means of conflict discovery. Through the arts children of all ages can come to a much deeper awareness of their emotional selves, their emotional reactions to conflict and their emotional growth through conflict. Furthermore expressive arts are particularly effective in helping children overcome trauma by first representing the trauma in music, dance, drama or visual art.

Peer mediation is the most prevalent, best known, and best understood form of conflict resolution education. Peer mediation is powerful on its own, but it can be more powerful if it is partnered with other conflict resolution education and peace education efforts. Having peer mediators involved with bias awareness initiatives, restorative justice and anti-bullying efforts are powerful possibilities. With appropriate guidance, the peer mediators can help manage lower level conflict involving bias and power abuse. Mediators can become mentors who educate younger children, as the WAVE program in Ohio demonstrates.

## Contextually and Culturally Sensitive Programs and Practices

All of the successful cases in this chapter have something in common – none of them used a "canned" program to accomplish their conflict resolution education or peace education goals. Is this merely a coincidence? No. It was a conscious and intentional move on their part to not use a lockstep program because it simply would not meet the needs of the children or the community. While programs and pre-prepared curricula are valuable tools in a larger effort, they are not sufficient in and of themselves and may do harm if applied inflexibly. Most successful conflict

resolution education and peace education efforts are the result of careful consideration of the underlying principles and philosophy the school or community is trying to achieve.

This requires the community leaders, parents, school administrators, teachers, staff and other stakeholders to identify their goals and principles. Once stakeholders can agree to a core set of principles, they can develop an array of techniques and use them as needed and in concert in order to determine the approach that best maximizes the principle at that time. The experience of the India City Montessori School is an excellent example. Their establishment of a peace education curriculum and culture resulted in their ability to discourage violence in their broader community.

## Best Practices

Several authors of the cases in this chapter commented on the challenges of institutionalization. What are some guidelines or best practices for making these efforts last?

### Involving Key People in Planning

Most change agents know that strategic planning is a key to the success of a new initiative. The schools and communities that succeed in conflict resolution education and peace education make sure that critical stakeholders are involved in making decisions and share responsibility for implementation.

### Setting Goals and Objectives

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Successful schools and communities clarify what they want to achieve, how they will get there and how they will know when it happens. They also realize that goals change over time and what they wanted to accomplish in the past may not be what they want to accomplish now.

## Expanding and Adapting

One key to institutionalization is adopting a "growth" frame of mind. If you think in terms of growth and incremental achievement you automatically think in terms of expansion and flexibility. Schools and the communities they serve are dynamic. Conflict resolution education and peace education must be dynamic as well. All of the cases presented in this chapter are excellent examples of this guideline.

## Listening to Children

We cannot overstate the importance of listening to youth when creating, evaluating, and improving programs. Their feedback is critical. Too often programs are adult-centered and when they become child-centered and even child-driven there is more commitment, authenticity and freshness.

## Proven Benefits

Although it is beyond the scope of this introduction to provide a summary of the proven benefits of peace education and conflict resolution education, it is important to note that these proven benefits have been demonstrated and reported in the research. We know that these efforts can

work and do provide important advantages for children. Two general reviews of research, one in peace education and the second in conflict resolution education, are briefly mentioned here. Baruch Nevo and Iris Brem (2002) gathered the past twenty years of evaluation research on the effectiveness of peace education programs. They note that between 1981 and 2000 approximately 1,000 articles, chapters, reports, symposia proceedings, dealing with a broadly defined peace education area were available for review. About 100 of these focused on peace education interventions and had some report of effectiveness evaluation, but only seventy-nine had sufficient detail for any analysis. Nevo and Brem examined these seventy-nine studies and found that the majority of these programs (51 out of 79) were found to be partially or highly effective in teaching peace and conflict skills.

In the area of conflict resolution education, Dan Kmitta and I edited a volume (2000) that summarizes the results of a research symposium on conflict resolution education sponsored by the United States Department of Education. The purpose of the symposium was to examine the results of current research and evaluation of school-based conflict resolution education programs (kindergarten - 12$^{th}$ grades). The major findings demonstrate that these programs increase academic achievement, positive attitudes toward school, assertiveness, cooperation, communication skills, healthy interpersonal/inter-group relations, constructive conflict resolution at home and school, and self-control. Research also suggests that conflict resolution education decreases aggressiveness, discipline referrals, drop-out rates, social withdrawal, suspension rates, victimized behavior, and violence. There is also substantial evidence that this kind of education

positively impacts school climate in terms of reducing disciplinary actions and suspensions, improving school climate (especially for elementary schools) and improving classroom climate.

## Conclusion

Hopefully, this introduction has accomplished its goals – to introduce you to peace education and conflict resolution education, to summarize some of the challenges facing educators in these programs, to suggest best practices in implementing these programs, and to summarize the proven benefits of these programs. As you will see in the cases that comprise the remainder of this chapter – conflict resolution education and peace education are a critical part of a peacebuilding effort.

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**Resources**

**Lead organizations**

Association for conflict Resolution – USA

acr@ACRnet.org

http://www.acresolution.org

Association for the Development of Education in Africa – France

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adea@iiep.unesco.org

http://www.adeanet.org

Centre for conflict Resolution – South Africa

Towards Peacable School Communities Programme

mailbox@ccr.uct.ac.a

http://ccrweb.ccr.uct.ac.za

Educators for Social Responsibility – USA

educators@esrnational.org

http://www.esrnational.org

Hague Appeal for Peace – USA

hap@haguepeace.org

http://www.haguepeace.org

International Peace Bureau – Switzerland

Peace Education Programme

mailbox@ipb.org

http://www.ipb.org

Living Values Education – USA

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Office for the United Nations

lv@livingvalues.net

http://www.livingvalues.net

Ohio Commission in Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management – USA

website@cdr.state.oh.us

http://disputeresolution.ohio.gov/schools.htm

UNESCO – France

Culture of Peace Program

For contact, please visit website

http://www.unesco.org/education/ecp/index.htm

West Africa Network for Peacebuilding – Ghana

Active Nonviolence and Peace Education programme

wanep@wanep.org

http://www.wanep.org/programmes/peace_education.htm

**Additional websites**

http://www.peace.ca/

Peace & Non-violence, Canadian Centers for Teaching Peace

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http://www.peacemakers.ca

Includes a selected bibliography on conflict resolution and peacebuilding

http://searcheric.org

Education resources database

http://www.teachingpeace.org

Eliminating violence through school, parent and community education.

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United Nations Cyberschoolbus

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## 11.1 Food, Education and Peacebuilding: Children's Learning Services in Sierra Leone

**After more than a decade of civil war, Sierra Leone is attempting to put back the pieces of a shattered society. Perhaps nothing is more crucial to those efforts than to invest in the nation's children, who suffered so terribly during the war. And that is precisely what is happening with Children's Learning Services, an initiative of a former university lecturer and the mother of five children, who was herself driven from her home during the war. After addressing the children's basic needs, talking about peace is on the menu.** *By Emma Kamara and Keith Neal**

Children's Learning Services (CLS) has been involved in equipping school children, young adults and teachers with conflict resolution skills. A basic premise of CLS is that while peace-building skills may not be inherent, they can be learned. But an equally important premise of CLS is that both the body and the mind must be nurtured to secure the future of Sierra Leone's children. As Emma Kamara, the founder and coordinator of CLS, says:

"First we address some basic needs. When the child has had something to eat and has been able to learn something, then he or she knows that you are concerned about him or her. Only then can you begin to talk about peace. So first we look for ways to feed the children by trying to link community food production and schools."

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Virtually all of Sierra Leone's citizens — and particularly its children — were subjected to violence during the civil war that officially ended in January 2002, and many encountered unspeakably traumatic experiences. In 1999, after rebels attacked and killed many residents of the capital, Freetown, Emma Kamara decided that positive action had to be taken to bring hope and restore dignity to children. Drawing on her own spiritual faith, she started out with hundred children between the ages of four and ten who attended her church. She taught them academic skills, introduced faith-building songs, and encouraged them to become peacebuilders.

Encouraged by the response of the children, the church and the local community to this program, Emma's vision began to grow. Her professional experience in education was invaluable. She was already thinking about how to restore the huge losses in educational opportunity caused by the war. And so she committed herself to working to involve all the children of Sierra Leone in peacebuilding.

It was a huge challenge to develop this vision with almost no resources. However, in 2001, with the support and encouragement of a few friends and churches in Sierra Leone and the United Kingdom, Emma Kamara founded Children's Learning Services as a Christian community-based organization focusing on child development. The aim was to give support in three key areas: quality basic education, peacebuilding and nutrition security. CLS started a pilot peace education project at the Freetown Modern Preparatory School. Video and computer classes were organized to enrich children's learning experiences. CLS also conducted in-service teacher-training sessions in peace education. Numeracy and literacy were promoted using basic learning materials given by the community. Parents and teachers were included in this endeavor. From

this early experience, CLS showed that peace education can be integrated into the curriculum and provide life skills necessary for resolving day to day conflicts at home and school.

As program coordinator, Kamara soon found that the work demanded a full-time commitment, so she resigned her university post. The sheer magnitude of the task ahead became apparent once it was possible to travel more freely and evaluate the needs of children outside Freetown.

CLS identifies with several other organizations in recognizing the fact that many children were forced to participate in the armed conflict and many more were helpless victims. After the war it became commonplace to find many ex-combatants among the nation's students. Once they had gone through the processes of demobilization, disarmament and re-integration, it was official policy to return them to school or some other training institution. Administrators are now facing the huge challenge of insuring that schools attended by ex-soldiers remain peaceful. Not only must they maintain the desired discipline of co-existence and tolerance, but also they need to learn conflict resolution skills to resolve day-to-day conflicts.

"The worst problem is that the children are deeply traumatized," *says Kamara*. "In a way they have lost their hope for a better future. And most of them have lost their positive self-image. If someone threatens to kill you it feels as if you are worth nothing. And then there are children who have killed."

Accordingly, the program begins not by directly addressing peacebuilding, but with stress management and trauma healing.

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*"Before being able to talk about peace, we give them skills to be able to handle their emotions, their fears and doubts."*

Significantly, nearly all the trauma-healing and peace-building programs set up at the end of the war were targeted at adults, and most operated at the community level. Schools did not consider peacebuilding to be a responsibility they should assume. But the CLS perspective is that, since young people, particularly school children, form a crucial part of every community, it is essential that they be given the means to help equip their local communities with conflict resolution skills and to bring their peace-building initiatives to fruition.

Since 2001 CLS has mobilized a number of volunteers and practitioners in peacebuilding, quality basic education and nutrition security in and out of schools. The work is done through the implementation of a variety of projects in collaboration with local communities, government ministries and other CBOs and NGOs. Among the organizations with which CLS is working is the National Collaborative Network for Peace Building in Sierra Leone (NCP-SL), the local affiliate of the West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP). WANEP has been involved in implementing Active Nonviolence and Peace education programs in various West African countries, and has supported this program to complement the efforts of various peace education initiatives by national governments and civil society groups. CLS was invited through NCP-SL to introduce a newly developed curriculum on active nonviolence and peace education in schools. Both WANEP and CLS initiatives were particularly timely, as they complemented the peacebuilding initiatives and projects of the government of Sierra Leone for teacher training, funded by the World Bank, to develop peace education materials.

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**Grassroots Level**

The CLS staff, after being trained to use the WANEP curriculum, embarked on the second phase of a highly regarded community re-integration program in the town of Port Loko with support from the British Department for International Development (DFID). The intervention in Port Loko followed an outbreak of violence between students attending two secondary schools in Port Loko District after a football match in December 2002.

The Community Re-integration Program organized a one-day workshop in January 2003 on the Promotion of Peace and Unity among Port Loko students and youths. In April 2003, CLS approached the organization with a proposal to promote conflict resolution and peace-building skills at the schools. This proved to be the first conflict resolution and peace-building program in the district targeting student communities. It was also one of the very few early interventions to ensure peaceful co-existence between victims and perpetrators of violence in the school setting. According to the principal of Schelenker Secondary School, this program was particularly important in creating linkage between the ongoing efforts to bring about reintegration, on one hand, and the separate efforts within the school to promote peaceful co-existence between ex-combatants and victims of the atrocities of war.

Students, teachers and administrators in the so-called Peace Clubs were given training in active nonviolence and peer mediation. Peer mediation is regarded as a form of conflict resolution in which trained student leaders help their peers to work together to resolve everyday disputes. Participation in peer mediation is voluntary and all matters discussed in mediation sessions remain confidential.

CLS and partners such as the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology Inspectorate in Port Loko also worked together to develop a Students' Peace Accord. This formed the main agenda item at a ceremony to launch school Peace Clubs in July 2003. Here, for the first time, six schools that had been in conflict with each other for several years came together. School-based peer mediation has now been accepted and is popular in these schools as an effective approach to conflict resolution and peacebuilding. The schools look forward to the continued support of CLS to keep their schools peaceful.

CLS and education officials alike are now determined to give every school the opportunity to set up a Peace Club and sign a Students' Peace Accord. If successful this will make a significant contribution towards facilitating personal, community and national peacebuilding, after a decade of brutal civil war. It is reported that their 'policing' influence is also valued and is being extended into community sports and recreation programs.

**Added Value**

One of the unique strengths of the CLS approach is its holistic view of education. So CLS strives to meet basic needs of children within the peace-building process. Furthermore, food shortages can themselves be a source of conflict. CLS has accordingly shaped its program so that in schools where communities cannot afford a meal for a school child, CLS advocates, and now works towards, linking community food production and school feeding.

CLS has modified the WANEP curriculum in ways that have strengthened both the peace education elements of the program as well as the educational process in general. For example, CLS has separated the stress management and trauma healing training modules from other

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modules, giving these subjects greater emphasis. Significantly, the peace-building activities have been implemented within the framework of general educational objectives. Video and computer classes have been included to facilitate the reinforcement of literacy, numeracy and other skills. And since well-resourced school libraries are not common in Sierra Leone, CLS has worked to establish long-term partnerships with schools to help them build up their libraries.

**Impact**

For both students and teachers, Peace Clubs and peer mediation are new concepts that have been well received. At the schools involved in these activities, a real effort has been made to foster school and community healing. Sometimes healing at a personal level takes place as well. There is a clear recognition that the ultimate goal is successful peacebuilding on a national scale. The value of these school-based mediation schemes is now widely recognized. Schools assume the responsibility for promoting active non-violence and providing security amongst students, particularly during and after games and other recreational events.

One school official, the principal of Murialdo Secondary School, says of the program at his school that the school authorities sense that they are beginning to make progress. The burden of dealing with so many student conflicts and disputes is slowly easing. In addition, the authorities are committed to actions to ensure the establishment of a Peace Club with the aim of fostering an educational environment conducive to learning without the fear of sporadic outbreaks of violence. Another school official, the principal of the only girls' school in this program, also reported favorably on the program. "This active nonviolence and peer mediation work," she said,

"is a valuable service to both the school and to the community. The students and teachers have my full support in making the operations of the Peace Clubs successful."

The deputy director of the Ministry of Education in Port Loko has remarked that the mere fact that children and young people are involved in peace-making ventures of this nature is impressive. "This is going to bring and promote an awareness of peaceful co-existence as an essential part of school and community life. It is true that schools in Port Loko have had a long struggle with conflicts. This program provides a framework for students to practice the art of learning to live at peace with each other."

To date, only limited internal evaluation of the CLS program has been carried out, but CLS hopes to begin a more detailed evaluation of the active non-violence and peer mediation program in the near future, to run in parallel with a psycho-social needs assessment which it also plans to carry out. It is certainly encouraging that students themselves clearly express their gratitude for the significant role Peace Clubs have played in ensuring peaceful interactions between schools, especially during games and sports competitions. In those situations, clearly visible peer mediators wearing identifiable t-shirts have almost certainly played a constructive role in insuring that these events conclude without violence.

## Challenges

As with most activities of this sort, the primary challenges CLS faces involve funding and personnel. The best hope for raising adequate funds and finding the trained personnel who will be ready to implement the programs on a long-term basis rests with the forging of fruitful partnerships between government and civil society organizations.

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Responding to cultural differences is another challenge CLS faces. It is vitally important that the training modules are implemented with adequate sensitivity for local cultural norms, and where necessary, that appropriate modifications to the curriculum be made in response to those prevailing cultural norms.

Peace Clubs have now been launched in a number of schools and their existence and operations are long-term in scope and nature. CLS, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and the Schools Administration have a long-term partnership that provides a supportive framework. Students are asking for further training and supervision that will build their capacity and empower them to continue operating the Peace Clubs on a sustainable basis.

The government recognizes that the war was fueled by rampant violent conflict on the campuses of secondary schools and colleges, and that a peace-building curriculum can help to prevent a repeat of this tragedy. It also understands that students need to learn and practice tolerance and co-existence to insure that schools are the peaceful places they are meant to be. This can only be accomplished by consciously setting aside time for reflection on how to heal the wounds resulting from war, abuse, violence, and deprivation. Only when students can consider these matters at length will they have the capability to build peace and transform their schools and communities.

What has worked well in a few schools must be extended to the whole country in the shortest possible time. All students, youth, and young adults are, potentially, key actors in the national peace-building process. That the potential is beginning to be realized is evident from the reactions of the parents of children already participating in CLS programs. According to Emma Kamara, they often ask her:

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*"What did you do with the children that made them so positive?"*

* Emma Kamara is the founder and coordinator of CLS. Keith Neal, now retired, spent 38 years teaching at secondary school level in the UK. Since his student days he has been associated with the global work of Initiatives of Change (formerly MRA). In recent years he has been particularly involved in building bridges with people in India, China, East Africa and Sierra Leone.

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Brochures and further information can be obtained by contacting either of the above addresses.

**Resources**

*Sierra Leone's Grassroots Peace-Builders, For a Change: Healing History/Transforming Relationships/Building Community*. By Keith and Ruth Neal. April/May 2003. Online: www.forachange.co.uk/index.php?se=reconciliation&stoid=307

*Food first, then peace.* By Suzette van IJssel. SIMS Share International Media Service, March 2004. Online: www.simedia.org/new/soc-econ-pol/food-first.html

Forthcoming in:
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## 11.2 Committed to Building Peace: City Montessori School in India

***It was September 23, 2002. History was being written in the glittering hall of the Unesco headquarters in Paris. For the first time in the award's long history, a school was being awarded the Unesco-prize for Peace Education. The recipient was India's City Montessori School, the world's largest private school.*** By Priti Barman*

Located in Lucknow, the capital of Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state, City Montessori School, popularly known as CMS, has been making pioneering efforts in the field of education ever since its founding over four decades ago. The school provides education from the pre-school level through secondary school. Not only does CMS embrace as its ambitious primary objective the task of "equipping children with spiritual, moral and material knowledge", but also developing "the capacities latent in human nature and [coordinating] their expression for the enrichment and progress of society". It does that by integrating countless outward looking activities into its program. Perhaps unique in the world, CMS has a full-fledged World Unity & Peace Education Department. The CMS philosophy revolves around the "twin poles" of globalism and godliness, and the school's mission is to promote world unity and peace by shaping future generations as "world citizens" whose minds have the virtues of unity and peace impressed upon them from day one. CMS seeks to send students into the world with a commitment to make it a better place for all, and with the moral and spiritual strength necessary to realize that commitment.

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CMS is unique in another way — with over 29,000 students, it can boast of the largest enrollment of any city-based private school in the world, a fact duly noted in the *Guinness Book of World Records*. The beginnings of course, were, considerably more humble. Established in 1959 on a borrowed capital of 300 rupees (about 10 dollar at the time) by Jagdish Gandhi and his wife Bharti Gandhi, CMS started off with just five students. Staunch followers of Mahatma Gandhi, the couple was deeply committed to the ideals of world unity and peace and firmly believed education was key. The institution, thus, took on the charge of educating young, impressionable minds and producing a new generation of "world citizens". Indeed, for its motto, CMS adopted the words of Mahatma Gandhi, *Jai Jagat* (Glory be to the world), which has served for many years as the greeting call of all staff members and students.

"A school must act as a lighthouse to society; providing direction, guidance and leadership to students, parents and society and also concern itself with the affairs of the age" is one of the core beliefs of CMS. The school also believes that true education releases capacities, develops analytical abilities, self-confidence, will power and goal setting competencies and instills the vision that enables one to become a self-motivated agent of social change serving the interests of the community. So CMS strives to provide its students with a spiritual outlook and a global vision. CMS students are prepared not just for exams but for life itself – to become conscious and contributing members of society, proactive agents of change, promoters of peace and upholders of high moral values.

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**Defusing a Tense Situation**

In 1992, CMS was credited with playing a crucial role in staving off religious violence in Lucknow after Hindu extremists destroyed the nearly 500 year-old mosque in nearby Ayodhya, sparking ethnic fighting that claimed an estimated 2,000 lives. With 40 percent of the population Muslim, Lucknow braced itself for violence. The risk of Hindu-Muslim fighting was heightened by the fact that only a skeletal police presence remained in the city, with most of the police force being sent to Ayodhya to deal with the violence there. The students of CMS tried to prevent further violence. They rode through the streets of Lucknow on a jeep equipped with loudspeakers, playing unity songs and leading a procession of thousands of children and parents carrying banners with slogans like: "We should Live in Unity", "The name of God is both Muslim and Hindu", "God is One, Mankind is One", "All Religions are One".

The governor saw this as an opportunity to control the violence and animosity. He asked the City Montessori School to provide a meeting place for the heads of all the city's religions. CMS organized daily meetings that were attended by the religious leaders, who regularly called and prayed together for communal harmony. Each evening, these leaders returned to their own communities and worked to maintain calm. While violence flared nearby, Lucknow remained peaceful.

It has been speculated that the success in avoiding violence, could, at least in part, be attributed to "the structural change" within the city that CMS has brought about over the past 40+ years.

*"Over 250,000 children have passed through CMS since it first opened its doors in 1959, the vast majority of which have come from Lucknow. Given that CMS encourages the family to*

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*participate in their children's development at the school (from helping shape the curriculum to a myriad of other pioneering activities) there can be little doubt that a great many families in Lucknow actively participated in the CMS peace initiative.1"*

**A Program of Peace Education**

Fortunately, CMS hasn't been called upon to intervene in a similar crisis since 1992, but it continues to stamp its influence on the community with its educational program, based on the four building blocks of its curriculum: universal values, global understanding, excellence in all things, and service to humanity. And it organizes or participates in literally dozens of peace-focused or peace-related events for its students, the surrounding community, and young people much further afield.

Just a few examples:

. CMS is a member of the UK-based Children's International Summer Village (CISV) Society, which organizes four-week long camps where children from participating countries live together and learn valuable lessons in co-existence by personally experiencing cross-cultural interaction. Since 1993, CMS has been hosting a CISV camp in Lucknow every year; on average, delegations from about a dozen countries participate at the camp. Likewise, CMS delegations participate at CISV camps held abroad every year.

. CMS is also a member of the International School-to-School Experience (ISSE), a sister concern of CISV, which facilitates exchange visits between schools from different cultures. The ISSE exchange also enables the children to learn about each other's culture as well as the

learning-teaching methods practiced in different schools. CMS has ISSE exchanges with schools in Mexico, Australia, Malaysia, Japan and Iceland.

. CMS organizes simulated World Parliament sessions where children posing as leaders of various countries of the world form a "world government" and discuss serious issues threatening the very survival of life on our planet. Issues discussed include the growing threat posed by ever grater quantities of armaments, environmental issues, and increasing violence and social tensions. Participants deliberate on ways and means to ameliorate these problems. The central theme of all discussions is again to find ways to ensure lasting world peace. Growing out of these sessions, and the realization that issues such as the increasing nuclear stockpile, terrorism, and the breakdown of social, economic and political order cannot be tackled by any one country or group of like-minded countries, CMS has committed to work for the establishment of a World Government.

. The Indo-Pak Children's Penfriends' Club – *Aao Dosti Karein* (Come, let's be friends) — was launched by CMS in 2002. With this program CMS has arranged for the exchange of thousands of letters between Indian and Pakistani school children with the aim of eliminating mutual misunderstanding by facilitating one-to-one contact between school children that eventually percolates down to the masses of both countries. The premise of this program is that the seeds of peace sown today will grow into a tree bearing the fruits of unity tomorrow. The ultimate objective of the exercise is to mobilize public opinion in both countries and compel their respective governments to adopt conciliatory rather than aggressive approaches to their mutual relations.

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**Chief Justices of the World**

In December 2004, City Montessori School hosted the Fifth International Conference of Chief Justices of the World on Article 51 of the Constitution of India. This provision of the constitution specifically pledges the Indian state to pursue peace, encourage the peaceful resolution of international disputes, and to foster respect for international law. The primary focus of the conference was on the need to establish a World Parliament with sufficient authority to enact a body of international that can be equally applicable on all the peoples and countries of the world.

**<End Box>**

**World Citizenship**

CMS views the world as a village — the home to many nations and peoples. In this village, it is no longer possible for the diverse peoples to live in isolation. And so, in a sense, its advocacy of "globalism" is simply a response to today's reality. The CMS approach aims to break down the barriers between peoples and to open up possibilities for global cooperation. When it proclaims *Jai Jagat*, it is encouraging its students to embrace a global perspective and the concept of world citizenship — a concept that is symbolized in the World Citizenship Dress which is worn at the World Peace Prayer ceremony that is incorporated into all CMS functions, and which depicts symbols of all the major world religions and the flags of every member of the United Nations. That concept of world citizenship is not unique to CMS, of course. It was John Lennon who articulated it in an anthem oft-repeated since he first sang it more than thirty years ago: *"You*

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*may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one. I hope someday you will join us, and the world will be as one."*

* Priti Barman recently joined the staff of CMS's Department of World Unity and Peace Education. Previously she worked as a journalist for the Times of India and ETV, a national television channel.

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www.cmseducation.org

**Resources**

*War Prevention Works: 50 stories of people resolving conflict.* By Dylan Mathews. Oxford: Oxford Research Group, 2001.

*People Building Peace: 35 Inspiring Stories from Around the World*. Utrecht: European Centre for Conflict Prevention, 1999.

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**Notes**

[1] Dylan Mathews, War Prevention Works

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## 11.3 Uniting Children During War: Sawa UNICEF in Lebanon

**Towards the end of Lebanon's long civil war, UNICEF reacted to a new crisis with a simple but effective way to reach the children, in spite of the fighting — a magazine, called Sawa (Together, in Arabic). It bridged the front lines and the ethnic divides with useful educational tools and a message of peace, understanding, reconciliation, and hope. Piggy-backing on the success of Sawa, UNICEF also organized a successful summer peace camp program in Lebanon.** *By Amal Dibo**

As if fourteen years of civil war had not been traumatic enough, in March 1989, the most densely populated areas of Beirut were subjected to an onslaught of rocket and artillery fire that was to continue intermittently, for more than a year. Beirut's war-weary citizens retreated with regularity to the cellars and bomb shelters, sometimes for weeks at a time. What little semblance of normality remained was shattered. Businesses shut their doors and 60 percent of Lebanon's schools were closed.

During the war years, UNICEF offered emergency relief assistance, health care and medicine, and educational programs in Lebanon. With its active, high-profile presence, UNICEF had become an experienced, trusted, and well-known organization, capable of acting quickly and effectively in a crisis, and even able to extend its programs to all regions of Lebanon despite the country's fragmentation along territorial lines. With the renewed outbreak of violence in 1989, traditional educational assistance was rendered impossible. The UNICEF staff was increasingly

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frustrated by the appalling conditions facing children and their own inability to do something for them in the shelters.

Most of the UNICEF programs in the areas of health care brought UNICEF into contact with the parents, rather than the children. The challenge was to find a way to reach children in spite of the fighting, to give them a chance to learn and play wherever they were — to make up for the lack of schooling, to help young people to deal with of their day-to-day hardships and help them to fill the long, tedious hours in the dim lights of the bomb shelters. What UNICEF wanted was to find some way to bring them together when forces beyond their control were driving them further and further apart.

One day, literally as the shells were raining down on the city, UNICEF's representative in Lebanon, André Roberfroid, his wife and, and UNICEF staff members Anna Mansour and the author, started throwing around ideas during a brainstorming session in the UNICEF cellar where they had gathered to wait out the artillery battle. It was during that brainstorming session that the idea emerged to publish a children's magazine and use it as an educational tool.

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***A complex country***

Once Lebanon was known as one of the most liberal and modern society in the Middle East. Now it is predominantly known as one of the complex countries in the heart of the region, with a mix of Christians, Sunni Muslims, Shia Muslims, Druze, Palestinians and others among its 3.7 million inhabitants. During the first half of the 1970s, the social fiber of Lebanon began to

unravel and it became increasingly unstable. Thousands of Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) fighters had set up bases in Lebanon after they had been evicted from Jordan, and their presence contributed greatly to the increasing instability. PLO fighters launched attacks against Israel from their Lebanese bases, the Israeli military retaliated with attacks against PLO interests in Lebanon, and efforts by the Lebanese government and Lebanese army to reassert control led only to greater tension among the various Lebanese communities. With the increasing instability, numerous militias were established, not only within the various communities, but also by political parties and other elements of Lebanese society. By 1975, the PLO had established a virtual "state within a state". In April 1975, factional fighting broke out, at first between Palestinian fighters and the Lebanese army, but subsequently, more generally, involving the militias of most of the other communities as well. In subsequent years, the civil war drew Israel, Syria, the United States, and France into a conflict that defied resolution. Finally, in 1989, with the Arab League playing a crucial role, a agreement was signed at Ta'if, Saudi Arabia leading to a tenuous peace and the beginning of a reconciliation process. While some shelling and acts of terror did take place between 1989 and 1991, the Ta'if agreement formed the basis for the restoration of calm, with a new parliament installed in 1990, and the dissolution of most militias by May 1991. By then, more than 100,000 people had died in the war and 900,000 people had been displaced.

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**Overwhelming Response**

UNICEF saw the project as a gift to Lebanon's children. *Sawa* would include not only school exercises, but also stories, arts and crafts activities, arithmetic, and so on. Yet in war-torn Lebanon, distribution would be complicated. For that, UNICEF made use of the network of dispensaries it had managed to maintain in spite of the fighting. To publicize the new magazine, UNICEF produced public service announcements and rushed them to local radio stations. The message was simple:

> Kids, tell your parents to go to the dispensary when it's safe. UNICEF has something fun for you and your friends there.

In the following weeks, three newsletters were produced and distributed free of charge. The response was overwhelming and the newsletters disappeared from the dispensaries as quickly as they could be delivered.

The decision was quickly made to formalize the project and to provide the magazine to Lebanese children for free on a regular basis. Sawa would provide children with an opportunity to learn and play wherever they were, and it would prepare a new generation for life in a society at peace. Funding was initially made available for 50,000 copies (later increased to 70,000) of a 30-page magazines every six weeks.

Each issue of Sawa focused on a central theme, carefully chosen in the context of the war environment, to take children beyond the confines of the shelters, stimulate their imaginations,

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encourage them to think, provide entertainment, and impart lessons in an interactive and approachable way.

The first page of each issue was devoted to a letter addressed to the young reader. Each issue consisted of a range of regular features which not only entertained the young readers, but also advanced an inclusive view of the world:

. "Know Your Country" took readers on imaginary tours to different areas of Lebanon — to Baalbeck, the Cedars, or simply across the "Green Line" of Beirut, or it described to them, making use of a map of Lebanon, the different foods or crafts from each region. For the children of Lebanon who tended to view people in terms of their religion, ethnicity, or clan affiliation, the "Know Your Country" feature offered an alternative emphasizing a Lebanese identity.

. "From Our Culture" featured Lebanese proverbs and folk tales, or told about prominent figures from Lebanese history, often combining educational material on culture with a moral message. The features cut across ethnic and cultural lines to provide the young readers with a point of contact with "the other".

. "Living Sawa" was the primary vehicle for promoting a more or less explicit message of peace. This included stories and parables illustrating children's rights, solidarity, unity and nonviolence.

. "Right or wrong?" provided a chance for the child to decide appropriate forms of behavior in different situations.

Sawa also included features on health, world cultures, science, arts and crafts, and information about ongoing UNICEF programs.

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**Impact**

Sawa's pedagogical approach was interactive, not pedantic: it sought to involve children on their own terms by seeing the world through their eyes. Those involved with Sawa knew that education is most effective when the children enjoy what they are doing. The creative team behind Sawa understood that success depended on understanding the reality of the daily lives of children and then finding ways to take them beyond those boundaries imposed upon them by the war. Each colorfully bound issue invited kids to play with word games, puzzles, jokes and riddles, coloring and drawing exercises, and even magic tricks, providing them with hours of entertainment. Sawa's content was thoughtfully designed to send an unthreatening message while helping to fill the gap left by the closure of schools. Stories were written for Sawa that presented a problem or an exercise involving looking at the world from various perspectives. Sometimes the readers were challenged to finish a story, or challenged to think about the story's consequences.

With each issue, Sawa's content came to be increasingly determined by the children themselves. Following the distribution of the first issue, UNICEF received 1,500 letters from children thanking the agency for the magazine, as well as stories, drawings, poems, and jokes. From the second issue onwards, Sawa devoted two pages to a readers' section called "Have Your Say", and the children were encouraged to bring their contributions to the point where Sawa was distributed. The effect was like opening a floodgate: UNICEF was soon receiving an average of 2,500 replies from each issue. These were carefully read and sorted, and the selected responses

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were published in a new "Return Mail" section of Sawa that often included suggestions from readers on what they would like to see next.

The contributions became an integral part of Sawa, and it was from this source of feedback that Sawa began to take on a more overtly peace-oriented and activist role. Through Sawa, children spontaneously began to give expression to their yearning for a better life. Poems, pictures, stories and prayers from the children talked about peace and possibilities, not about war and violence. Although the war was always there in the background, very few of the 45,000 responses received actually spoke of the war and its hardships.

Sawa continued to appear regularly until the end of the war late in 1990. As the needs Lebanon's children changed, the Sawa project changed as well. With the implementation in 1991 of the National Reconciliation Charter, relative calm was restored to all of Lebanon except for the southern areas bordering on Israel. UNICEF shifted away from the emergency mode in which it had functioned during the war years, and with the shift, funding of existing projects came under review. Responsibility for Sawa was turned over to the Education Program, and the magazine took on a new function in support of an initiative called "Learning for Life". Publication of Sawa ceased altogether in 1994.

**The UNICEF Peace Camp Program**

Prior to the outbreak of war in Lebanon, local organizations and NGOs had operated summer camps. Simultaneous with the successful launch of Sawa, as UNICEF staff considered ways to build on Sawa's success, they began to entertain the idea of organizing summer camp programs as a way to get children from across the ethnic and religious barriers to meet each other.

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UNICEF program officer for Education Anna Mansour approached some fifty NGOs, mostly organizations with a confessional affiliation, and asked them to help recruit children from their communities for a summer camp program. UNICEF would provide funding, logistics, and training for camp staff.

UNICEF articulated three simple principles for the camp program: that the camps would bring together youth of different regions, religions, and social status; that they would give youth and children a better chance to know one another and to know their country through discovery and sharing; and that youth and children would experience "living together" positively, sharing human, social, and relational values through creative and recreational activities

Despite the obstacles posed by the wartime environment, planning went ahead in the spring of 1989, with the training of staff and arrangements for the complicated logistics. UNICEF representative Roberfroid played on the credibility of his organization to persuade local leaders to cooperate in moving the children securely around the country. The camps began in earnest in the summer of 1989, and were, from the outset, remarkably successful. Children who had, in many cases, never met anyone from one of the other communities, were often slightly cautious and apprehensive at first, but after a few days, recalls Roberfroid, there was a "sort of explosion of will to live together, as if they had been thirsty for it." Besides the benefits for the young campers who met each other and played together for the first time, the older monitors, some of whom had served as militia members during the war, also underwent a transformation. They had been trained as "youth animators", but the staff was uncertain if they would be able to transcend the mistrust and animosity that had developed. To the surprise of some UNICEF staff, they responded enthusiastically to the camp environment. According to Roberfroid, "The more they

had been extremists during the war, the more involved they became in the program. These were the most energetic young people in Lebanon."

In its first year, 29,000 Lebanese children attended 34 summer peace camps and 79 day camps, concluding in September with a daylong "Peace Festival" bringing together 700 youth animators and 9,000 children. By September 1991, UNICEF had reached 100,000 children and had mobilized 240 NGOs to work on the program.

**Looking Back**

In practical terms, the Sawa team learned as the project progressed about the importance of distribution, and increasingly worked not only with its own network of dispensaries, but also with NGO partners and other institutions, including youth groups, women's organizations, and sports clubs, to achieve widespread coverage. Sawa was distributed via children's groups, day care centers, playgrounds, churches, mosques, shelters and other public areas, and 10,000 copies of every issue were distributed to Palestinian camps. Responses from children would be picked up and taken back to the dispensaries and from there to the Sawa team at UNICEF headquarters in Beirut. Many UNICEF field staff eagerly embraced their new role in the promotion of Sawa, since it enhanced their relationship with NGOs.

More in the realm of theory, the Sawa and peace camp projects demonstrated that when peace activities are focused on youth, even ostensible adversaries may exhibit more tolerant attitudes. This may be because the adult community has a genuine wish for their children to live in peace, or because large segments of the adult community view children as a sort of "zone of peace".

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Whatever the reasons, the successful implementation of peacebuilding activities focused on children leads to opportunities to expand the peacebuilding initiatives into the society at large. Finally, perhaps one of the most important — and surprising — lessons learned by the Sawa project and the summer camp program was that it was indeed possible to mobilize for peace even in the midst of a war environment. This should give hope to those in other conflict zones about the potential to organize peacebuilding activities even when a climate of violence poses serious obstacles.

* Amal Dibo is a former UNICEF program officer, in charge of emergency assistance to displaced, of health programs namely vaccination, of education programs especially on Human Rights, amongst others editor of Sawa. Presently she is teaching History of Civilization at the American University of Beirut and active in NGOs working for art, science, culture and peace.

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**Resources**

*Reconciliation – Theory and Practice for Development Cooperation.* Local Capacities for Peace program, CDA

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## 11.4 Managing Conflict at School: Ohio Commission on Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management in USA

***With the number of physical confrontations increasing across Ohio's school districts, serious discipline problems in the classrooms, and escalating violence-related costs, educators are taking it upon themselves to address these issues by creating comprehensive school conflict management programs. As a result Ohio now leads America in creating effective responses***.

By Jennifer Batton*

A fifteen year-old boy relates:

*"When my brother and sister were fighting I broke it up. Then I started using my ground rules. I told them to stop and I told them what I knew about mediation. Then they shook hands at the end and worked out the problem."*

An eight year-old girl shares this story:

"My sister was mad at her boyfriend because she said he went out all the time and did not invite her. Her boyfriend said the same thing, that his girlfriend (the older sister) did things with friends and didn't invite him or make time to spend with him. After I mediated, they agreed to go out once a week."

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Like hundreds of others in Ohio, these students learned their peacemaking and mediation skills through a school-based conflict management program. Between 1990 and 2003 the number of the 612 Ohio school districts with some form of conflict management program grew from thirty to more than 400. While in 1993 there were a mere 208 schools actively addressing the problem, by 2004 more than 1,700 schools had established peer mediation and conflict management programs.

Moreover, Ohio's educators are moving beyond traditional peer mediation, which focuses primarily on student-student conflicts, to a more holistic model that provides dispute resolution methods and skills not just within the school building but for the entire school community. Effective institutionalization requires a sustained capacity for program development in each school, and participating schools should be committed to four levels of intervention: school culture, pedagogy, curricula, and student programming:

*School culture* looks at policies and procedures, shared goals, structures and systems. Administrators should support the modeling of conflict management skills and utilization of these skills in the schools daily operations. One example would be in how conflicts are resolved by students such as through the development of a peer mediation program.

*Pedagogy* addresses the art of teaching including strategies such as cooperative learning, multicultural teaching methods, positive discipline, and social and emotional learning strategies.

*Curriculum integration* includes integration of conflict resolution topics across subject areas. English, Social Studies, and History courses offer numerous opportunities to talk about conflict and positive and negative approaches to disputes. English lessons can integrate discussions of

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dispute resolution by including biographies and historical novels. Social Studies can consider community or civil disputes over land, historical preservation, discrimination, etc. History, of course, offers countless opportunities for discussing disputes and alternatives to violence and war. *Student programming* includes implementing programs such as peer mediation, peer mentoring programs, or a student conduct plan using conflict management strategies and philosophies as a premise.

For schools to see significant positive changes, it is vital to train *all* adults who interact with students, including parents, administrators, classroom educators, bus drivers, playground assistants, school secretaries, and cafeteria workers. This ensures that these skills are modeled and reinforced from the time the student boards the school bus or walks onto school property, to the end of the school day – and continue at home.

A ten year-old fifth grade boy illustrates the importance of this transfer of conflict resolution skills from school to home and community:

"*When I walk, run, or ride my bike I listen for arguments around the neighborhood. Once, I saw my cousin arguing with his neighbor. I ran to see what was happening. They were going to fight so I stopped them."*

In the following boxes there are two examples of school districts in the state, one rural and one urban, representing different cultural populations, both of which are experiencing success as they develop their comprehensive school conflict management programs.

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**<Box>**

**Winning against violent environments**

Students can do more than learn about techniques of conflict management; they themselves can become agents of change by taking those skills into their communities. Young people are empowered by providing them with skills such as effective decision making, communication, and problem solving, and encouraging them to use them in their daily lives, providing assistance to others.

The Winning Against Violent Environments Program (WAVE) in the Cleveland Municipal School District not only subscribes to this philosophy, but implements it through its conflict management advisors in Cleveland's Public Schools. The Program, run out of Martin Luther King Jr. Law and Municipal Careers High School in Cleveland, is located in Hough, one of the city's toughest neighborhoods. This program began in 1983 and is the oldest school-based conflict resolution program in Ohio, one of the oldest in the United States.

WAVE students and an adult coordinator train other students and adults as conflict managers and mediators. The two main conflict resolution processes taught by WAVE trainers are a formal mediation model for students and adults in middle school and high school (grades 6-12), and a less formal process for use on the playground, cafeteria, or in the classroom. Under an additional, "student trainer" model, the students teach the lessons, lead the training activities, thus involving urban youth as positive agents of change in their schools and communities.

While in the beginning WAVE focused strictly on peer mediation, it has now adopted a more comprehensive approach where, for example, the program advisors teach lessons across subject areas to all of their students, giving in-service training to their fellow educators on the skills of

conflict management. They also conduct school and community-wide activities such as peace walks in the neighborhood, working with student conflict managers to raise money to provide food baskets for needy families, and holding peace assemblies for parents, students, and staff. WAVE has "trained thousands of students grades K-12, provided professional development to teachers, led parent meetings and training sessions, conducted faculty and staff in-service programs, developed the grades K-2 training model, and facilitated public meetings of young people and adults." (Close and Lechman,1997).

WAVE still includes peer mediation as a component of many of the schools' conflict management programs. During the 2003-2004 school year alone, student mediators in the district conducted more than 9,000 mediations. The benefits were revealed in an evaluation of the WAVE program by Kathy Bickmore, Ph.D. of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. Her research showed “significant improvements in students understanding and capacity to positively deal with conflicts, improved student attitudes toward attending school, a reduction in suspensions for negative behaviors, and an improvement in academic achievement by those students who were trained in these important life skills” (July 2000).

The WAVE program has been a school conflict management catalyst for other districts. WAVE training, combined with a state-sponsored grant training program, led to the development of a district-wide school conflict management program in Pioneer, Ohio.

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**The Ohio Commission**

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The State of Ohio leads the United States in school-based conflict management, in part due to the work in education of the Ohio Commission on Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management. The Commission plays a pivotal role by supporting the efforts of the school districts, setting up training programs, and providing program development leadership and expertise. The Commission, established in 1989, provides dispute resolution and conflict management resources, training, and direct services to Ohio schools, colleges, universities, courts, communities, and state and local governments. It was the United States' first and currently only government-sponsored Commission to promote dispute resolution at all levels of society. The Commission's evaluations demonstrate that its work leads to significant reductions in inter-personal conflict, particularly in public schools.

In 1989 Richard F. Celeste, governor of Ohio created the Governor's Peace and Conflict Management Commission to review the status of peace and conflict management programs in the state of Ohio and to develop new initiatives to help Ohioans better resolve their disputes. The Commission focused on four primary areas: primary and secondary education, higher education, the courts, and community and public policy. As part of its final report to Governor Celeste, this Commission recommended that the state of Ohio create a permanent Commission on Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management to develop practical programs that teach people how to resolve disputes without conflict and without resorting to lawsuits.

Under Governor Celeste, former Peace Corps director in the Carter administration, Ohio had the philosophical conditions for mediation and conflict resolution programs to flourish. In 1989 the Ohio General Assembly, with the support of the chief justice of the Supreme Court of Ohio, the Ohio Bar Association, and the Ohio Council of Churches, enacted legislation that created the

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Ohio Commission on Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management. The Commission is jointly governed by members appointed by the legislative, judicial, and executive branches of government.

**Education Programming**

The Commission, in partnership with the Ohio Department of Education, has promoted conflict resolution education programs in primary and secondary schools, colleges and universities through grants, training, and resource development with the goal of institutionalizing conflict resolution education into their daily operations.

Five years ago, the Commission began a pilot project with the American Association of Health Educators and the Conflict Resolution Education Network to integrate conflict resolution into higher education. Faculty at Ohio's colleges and universities are invited to take part in this annual Conflict Resolution Education Institute. Currently thirty-six Ohio colleges and universities have participated. Participants learn to understand the rationale for the integration of conflict resolution into higher education, to demonstrate the knowledge of core concepts, and to develop an action plan to implement a conflict resolution curriculum in teacher education.

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**Students Offering Acceptance and Respect**

In the mid-1990s, the guidance counselors at the North Central Local School System in Pioneer decided they wanted to make the atmosphere of their school system more inviting and peaceful for everyone. They began by doing research on different conflict management programs across

the state. With a grant from The Ohio Commission on Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management, in 1999 they were on their way!

Ghandi once said, "We must be the change we want to see in the world." The counselors knew that in order to embark on a journey toward change, they needed to identify a group of individuals within the school who would be the "change (they) wanted to see in the world," so they began with the students. North Central soon had the SOAR program, which initially began as a peer mediation program, with students (grades 5-12) trained to help their peers find non-violent solutions to their conflicts.

As more needs and concerns came to the counselors, they and the students developed (over the next five years) a comprehensive conflict management program for students and staff, grades K-12. New peer mediators continue to be trained each year in a six-step mediation process. In addition, high-school SOAR members began going into elementary classrooms to teach younger students about conflict management, feelings, peer pressure, bullying and decisionmaking. Students in the middle grades work one-on-one to mentor younger students on self-esteem issues and friendship skills.

Since the advent of the SOAR program, the number of discipline occurrences at the school have dramatically declined. It is not unusual for older students to ask if they can talk out their differences with one another privately, before it escalates into a major conflict. The school's atmosphere is more positive and inviting. Staff members have been encouraged to attend conferences on infusing conflict management lessons into their classrooms. It is not unusual to see a Peace Corner in an elementary classroom, or have Diversity Days at the junior high and high school levels. There is also an annual Peace Week where elementary students are

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recognized for being Peacemakers throughout the school year. Parents are invited to this celebration to honor those students who are the community's and nation's future peacemakers. Middle school students design and create peace banners which are proudly hung in the cafeteria, and high school students take part in activities promoting peace.

North Central has also introduced their program to their community. Parent meetings encourage peaceful communication at home. SOAR members make presentations to local civic groups to explain their program. On September 11, 2003, North Central school dedicated its Peace Pole, where students and community members are reminded of the importance of peace in six languages. The pole is proudly displayed beside the school marquee, visible to all who pass by.

One of the biggest successes of the program has been an annual Visions of Peace Conference, which SOAR hosts each spring. Schools throughout northwest Ohio are invited to attend. Participants, over 300 in two years, learn about peer mediation, peace week, team-building, social justice, and dealing with flash judgments. Every year students from thirteen different schools gather to learn how they can start or enhance a peacemaking program at their own school.

The SOAR program empowers others to commit to peace, in the conviction that the only way the world will change is if we believe we can make a difference, and begin to make that difference in our world, however small that change or that world may be.

SOAR continues to develop each year. Student comments such as "I think it is a great program because it improves student relations," and, "Peer Mediation definitely eases tension among students" encourage SOAR members to continue to make their school a safe and positive

environment. Students and staff at North Central are taking Ghandi's words to heart and working toward "being the change (they) want to see in the world".

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**Results**

Most educators look for a reduction in disciplinary actions (suspensions, expulsions, truancy) and general disruptions in the classroom when they propose developing a school conflict management program. The Commission is interested not only in affecting change in student behavior, but also in creating a safe and supportive learning environment for students, teachers and parents. This stems from the idea that academics are positively affected if the philosophy and skills of school conflict management are fully integrated into daily school life. Evaluations of the Ohio experience show that schools focusing on the whole school approach see improved academic achievement, reduced truancy, fewer suspensions and expulsions, less time spent on dealing with discipline, financial cost savings to schools, and an improvement in overall school climate.

The annual cost per student to administer the school conflict management grant training program is approximately twelve dollar. When compared to the per student cost of suspending a child (231 dollar) or expelling a student (431 dollar), the program is clearly cost effective. Independent evaluations of the truancy prevention mediation program demonstrate a significant increase in pupil attendance and decrease in tardiness for participating schools resulting in an average cost savings of 1,889 dollar per school. With 171 participating schools (currently funded by the

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Commission) total program cost savings for the 2002-2003 school year was estimated at $323,019.00.

**The Future**

To further institutionalize conflict resolution education in Ohio, the Commission recently partnered with Temple University, Cleveland State University, and Kent State University to design the Conflict Resolution Education in Teacher Education project, which addresses two crises in urban education across the U.S. - teacher attrition and unsafe, conflict-ridden learning environments. Through this project the partnership will develop a conflict resolution education/social and emotional learning curriculum and training process for higher education faculty, and develop a curriculum for the Continuing Education Units all teachers must earn to retain their certification. The impact of curricula and training processes on teacher success in classroom management, establishing positive classroom climate, student learning and academic achievement, and on teacher satisfaction and teacher retention will be evaluated. A version of the curriculum suitable for use in traditional and on-line/distance education formats will be developed along with a mentoring structure that utilizes university-based teacher educators and school-based educators.

**Conclusions**

While Ohio's comprehensive model is paving the way for more effective program institutionalization, more work is needed to establish conflict resolution education as a permanent fixture in our education system. Despite state-wide education statistics showing that

disciplinary incidents in schools in Ohio for fighting far outnumber disciplinary incidents related to alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs (which have attracted substantial prevention funding), funding continues to decrease for conflict resolution education efforts. Yet conflict resolution evaluations show significant decreases in discipline-related problems such as fighting result in significant cost savings to the school district and state.

This lack of funding targeted at prevention of inter-personal violence through efforts such as conflict resolution education is not a phenomenon unique to the state of Ohio. It is critical to better inform funders and policymakers of the data that links this kind of education in our schools and universities with a reduction in violent incidents. A recent World Health Organization report on inter-personal violence (excluding the costs related to war) shows this violence costs the U.S. around 300 billion dollar annually, with violent crime committed by a single minor generally costing the victim approximately 61,000 dollars in expenses. Funders should be made aware that investing in K-12 dispute resolution education is critical to seeing a reduction in societal violence. The billions saved by investing in prevention can then be reallocated from more punitive efforts (court costs, juvenile detention centers, prisons, etc.) and redirected toward critical needs such as health, education, and economic development.

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**Peace Boat's International Student Program**

Since its foundation in 1983, Peace Boat has been active in the field of education for peace and sustainability through the organization of educational voyages, based on lectures, workshops and study-exchange programs both onboard the ship and in ports of call. Its International Student (IS) programs in particular, provide innovative approaches to peace and sustainability-related studies through intensive learning onboard and direct exposure to issues in various countries.

Peace Boat aims to increase access to peace education and conflict resolution training to young people from regions in military or political conflict through the IS program. A selected number of young people from opposing sides of conflicts are invited to participate in an advanced conflict analysis and peaceful conflict resolution-training program, on a scholarship basis. As well as peace training, the international students help other participants onboard Peace Boat's educational voyages understand their lives and challenges, thus contributing greatly to the general participants' overall understanding of the nature of conflict.

The aim of the IS program is for students to learn about peaceful conflict resolution and develop the knowledge, skills, experience and motivation that will equip them with the means to work for peace when they return to their homes.

To date, there have been six IS programs, involving 37 students from Palestine, Israel, Serbia, Croatia, Cyprus, India, Pakistan, Northern Ireland, Colombia, the United States, Korea, China, and Taiwan.

Website: www.peaceboat.org

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## 12. The Arts and Peacebuilding: Using Imagination and Creativity



By John Paul Lederach*

The importance and potential of arts as a tool for peacebuilding should not be underestimated. To illustrate this, John Paul Lederach, in this introduction, tells some modern "Pied-Piper" tales. The cases following this text elaborate further on how arts is currently being used in peacebuilding activities in different regions around the world.

As a young child I remember hearing the fairy tale of the Pied Piper.1 A town was beset with a great rat infestation and had no hope on the horizon that it would change soon. Experts and advisors came and went but nobody could move the rats. Then a stranger showed up and promised, for a considerable sum of money, to clean the town of this life-destroying problem. The mayor agreed. The following day the stranger turned out to be a piper, a flutist of sorts, and lifting the pipe to his lips he played a melody that floated out across the streets. The rats began to move, drawn to the music. More and more rats gathered following the sounds of the music. He led them out of town and straight into a river where the rats drowned. Back in town celebrations

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were breaking out everywhere. The Piper pleased with his work approached the Mayor for his due compensation. With the problem now gone the Mayor hem hawed, feigned financial difficulties, and turned the Piper away without a single coin. Disgruntled the Piper returned next day to the streets and lifted his fluted melody again. This time the children came and then followed the Piper out of town leaving the community without the joys of young voices or life for the future. The moral of the story seemed clear: When you give a promise, you best keep your word.

Four decades later when I read the story again, this was not the moral that caught my attention. What I saw was the power of a flutist to move a town, address an evil, and bring the powerful to accountability. Without any form of power or even prestige much less a violent weapon a flutist transformed a whole community. I was struck with the nonviolent power of music and the creative act. The moral of the story now seemed to be: Watch out for the flutist and his creative music for like the invisible wind it touches and moves all that it encounters in its path.

**Artful Change**

In 1996 I found myself sitting in the Killyhevlin Hotel in Fermanagh, Northern Ireland. I was a keynote speaker at a conference titled "Remember and Change," a phrase that had been pulled from a talk I had given in Belfast a year earlier (Lederach, 1995). In 1994, at the time of the ceasefire declarations by both republican and loyalist paramilitary groups, people engaged in the conflict transformation and peacebuilding work had requested some reflections on what might beset them as they entered a post-accord phase of violent conflict. In that talk I suggested that reconciliation was not forgive and forget. It was remember and change.

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The conference in the Killyhevlin Hotel was attended by delegates from peace and reconciliation partnerships across Northern Ireland representing all sides of the conflict and a wide range of community, economic and political interests, now trying to move toward a new horizon. The hotel is located on the shore of Lough Erne, near Enniskillen. The venue was not without symbol and purpose. On a number of occasions bombs had all but destroyed it. The conference was for the most part a series of talking heads like myself giving speeches and exchange insights and ideas that were to translate to programs. The one exception was just following the lunch. The planners had decided to take what was considered a delicate addition. They had commissioned a troupe of dancers made up of young local catholic and protestant girls to choreograph an expressive dance to the background of music. The song chosen was Irish folk artist Paul Brady's *The Island*. Behind the stage there was a large screen. While the young women performed their dance, slides--pictures everyone knew capturing the scenes of the 32-year-old "Troubles"--would appear without comment.

The artistic process was not without its risks. When Brady's song had first emerged a decade earlier it came in the heat of the worst cycles of violence in the Irish conflict. *The Island* raised a question about the reasons and logic of the violence and those who justified it on one side or another. A solo voice accompanied by a piano, the lyrics are profound, suggesting that violence was trying to "carve tomorrow from a tombstone" and was wasting our children's future "for the worn-out dreams of yesterday" (Brady, 1992).

When first played publicly the song generated immediate controversy. Perceived as written by a well-known artist from one community criticizing people engaged in the violence threats went

out from the paramilitaries against the artist and radio stations that would play the music or stores that would sell it. For years *The Island* was not played or circulated publicly.

In the early afternoon I found myself seated between one of the highest standing officials of the police force in Northern Ireland and the mayor of the town, both fine and dedicated men, from different sides of the conflict, and both pleasant but also rather formal in demeanor, toughened, you might say, by the years of their experience and the nature of their positions. The song began and the dance troupe's graceful first steps brought hundreds in the audience to complete silence. The color slides of Belfast's troubled murals, children running from fire bombs, funeral processions, parades, riveted the eyes and captured the haunting feel of the music and lyrics juxtaposed against the ballet-like movement of these young women moving together though from different sides of the violent divide. The whole of the Irish conflict was held in a public space, captured in a moment that lasted less than five minutes.

Near the end of the performance I suddenly noticed that the two men on both my sides were discretely pulling handkerchiefs from pockets and wiping tears. Behind me I could hear and feel the same thing happening. One of the men leaned over and apologized to me, as if, somehow it were a lack of professional etiquette to have displayed such emotion in public. The seminar proceeded. Speeches were given. Program initiatives were proposed and evaluated. It was a day in the process of a long slow transformation. Looking back now nearly a decade later it would be interesting to know what people remember of that day. Without locating the specific documents I know that I cannot remember a single speech, proposal or formal panel response. I do remember, vividly, the image and feeling of those five minutes of combined music, lyrics, choreography, and photos. It created an echo in the head that has not gone away. It moved me.

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**West-African Pied Piper**

In the larger picture of politics and social change many would say, "And so what? What difference does something like this artistic five minutes actually make"? I am not sure I can answer that question. On the other side of the coin I would ask a different but parallel question: How, when and why did politics and developing responses to needed social change come to be seen as something separate from the whole of human experience? The artistic five minutes, I have found rather consistently, when it is given space and acknowledged as something far beyond entertainment, accomplishes what most of politics has been unable to attain: It helps us return to humanity, a transcendent journey that, like the moral imagination can build a sense that we *are*, after all, a human community.

Let me illustrate it with another example. In the 1980's the countries of Burkina Faso and Mali exploded into war over border issues. International mediation efforts failed on numerous occasions to stop the fighting. Then the neighboring President of Guinea, Ahmed Sekou Toure, persuaded his fellow Presidents of Burkina Faso and Mali to attend a meeting at his palace. Samuel Doe and Emmanuel Bombande recount the unexpected events that followed (Doe and Bombande, 2002).

"In front of the Presidential Palace in Conakry, one of West Africa's celebrated griots (praise singers), Kanja Kouyate, put on a spectacular performance before the host and visiting presidents. The performance took on the form of entertainment, but Kanja Kouyate was calling

on the two presidents at war to make peace. He did this by evoking their ancestors and appealing to their inherent human goodness as leaders to lead their people out of conflict. Through poetry, song, and dance he brought out qualities that were a hallmark of a true African leader and challenged the two presidents to look to their ancestors and bring back dignity instead of shame and suffering to their peoples. So emotional was the performance that the two presidents not only shed tears and embraced publicly, but took a solemn oath before the public and witnessed by their ancestors not to return to war."

The story does not end there. In the next months, pushed by the presidents, a peace agreement was signed. It has not been violated since. It would seem that the peoples of Burkina Faso and Mali serendipitously received a visit from the Pied Piper.

**Paper Flowers**

Going back to Northern Ireland, the last major bomb that destroyed buildings and lives in the "Troubles" came several years after the ceasefires had been declared. On August 15, 1998 in the town of Omagh the warnings about the bomb were misleading. As a result, instead of people being directed away from the threat they were evacuated into the path of the bomb. The hidden device exploded. Twenty-nine people and two unborn children died. Over 400 were injured. The events in the community of Omagh sent waves of shock across the world. Many feared the Irish peace process would collapse. Return to the cycles of violence seemed imminent.

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The public--local and well beyond--responded much as they had to the death of Princess Diana the previous year. Flowers and wreaths arrived by the hundreds, filling the bombsite, the surrounding streets, and the grounds of the local hospital. It was an extraordinary outpouring of grief and solidarity. Some weeks later, still reeling with the devastation, town officials felt a certain quandary that was expressed openly by the mayor in a radio interview. “What are we going to do with all the flowers?” The flowers were now wilting, yet they were like a sacred shrine that could not be removed. Traveling in her car artist Carole Kane listened to that interview had an immediate idea: Make paper. She called Frank Sweeney, head of the Department of Arts and Tourism of the Omagh District. Thus began the healing journey that came to be known as the Petals of Hope (Kane, 1999).

Men, women and children from all walks of life and both sides of the identity divide in Omagh participated in a series of workshops that saved the flower petals and processed the raw material of the wreaths and arrangements. Over time the organic mush became textured paper of different hues. Common everyday people seeking for a way to respond became the artists that crafted small and large pieces from the paper, incorporating the preserved petals. Carol Kane developed a number of pieces alongside them. As people worked with their hands, they talked about where they had been when the bomb went off, what they remembered and experienced. Touching and making something while talking began the healing.

On March 10, 1999, a private viewing of the paper pieces produced was opened for the families who had lost members in the bombing. Those who had worked and created the art chose one piece to give to each family who had lost someone in the bomb. In a book of condolences sent to

Omagh, Nobel Poet Seamus Heaney had written three stanzas from "The Cure of Troy." He gave permission for these lines to be used as titles of three pieces.

*So hope for a great sea-change*

*On the far side of revenge*

*Believe that a farther shore*

*Is reachable from here.*

*Believe in miracles*

*And cures and healing wells.*

The exhibit was then opened to the public and has since traveled around Ireland and Europe. Kane (1999) recounts her experience watching the families see the pieces for the first time.

*"On the night of the private viewing there was a quietness about the exhibition space. It felt like a sanctuary . . . families spoke quietly to each other. . . . This wasn't like an ordinary opening, where I'd be concerned about people liking the images and buying the work. None of the normal things mattered . . . I spoke to Stanley McCombe about his picture as the lady who had made this piece had requested it would be given in memory of Stanley's wife. This was the picture of the dove, which was given from a Roman*

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*Catholic person to a Protestant person. This summed up what all my work was about and Stanley was touched by this gesture."*

Belief in the creative act, as Heaney puts it, is belief in "cures and healing wells."

How do we transcend the patterns that create such great pain and still attend to the difficult bogs where our feet seem mired? I have come to believe that it has something to do with the artistic endeavor more than the feat of engineering. It is a process that must breath life, put wings on the pepper pod, and paint the canvas of what could be while not forgetting what has been. Omagh, too, found its Pied Piper.

**John Paul Lederach is Professor of International Peacebuilding at the Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame. He was the founding director of the Conflict Transformation Program at Eastern Mennonite University where he has been named a Distinguished Scholar. He works extensively as a practitioner in conciliation processes, active in Latin America, Africa, Southeast and Central Asia.*

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**Note**

1 I want to acknowledge the guiding hand and help of David Bolton and Herm Weaver in the development of this chapter.

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The Role of Artistic Processes in Peacebuilding in Bosnia-Herzegovina

How did artists and conflict resolution practitioners use arts during the war and in the post-conflict period in Bosnia-Herzegovina? Research* suggests that arts can play an important role at all stages of a conflict, including:

. Arts as a barometer: arts-based processes can serve as warning of the escalation of tensions in society through examining the content of visual, artistic or theatrical products (latent conflict).

. Arts for resistance and survival: during heightened conflict arts-based processes can serve as a means of resisting violence and/or provide relief as a means of temporary escape (during manifest or extreme conflict).

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. Arts for peacebuilding and healing – arts-based processes can bring together groups in conflict to work collaboratively via creative processes and/or help people release negative feelings (post-conflict).

(These categories emerged from the research in part due to an interview with Munir Podumljak, Partnership for Social Development, Croatia)

The following chart provides a visual representation of the stage of conflict and area of impact of arts-based activities.

**< Insert Figure 12.1: Stages of Conflict and Arts>**

The research focused on both the role of arts-based activities during the war and how various arts-based activities were building peace after the war. During the conflict, the arts had a critical role in keeping the multicultural spirit of Bosnia-Herzegovina alive in the midst of extreme conflict, particularly in Sarajevo. An example is the first Sarajevo International Theater and Film Festival, organized in 1993, that was attended by over 20,000 people. On a smaller scale there were countless creative therapy projects to help youth survive the terror of war. Artistic processes provided a basis for people to come together for community-building, support and temporary release from the difficulties of the war.

In the post-war period a number of groups have used music, theater, photography and other arts-based activities as a basis for facilitating interethnic interaction and reconciliation. Examples include the use of theater to bring youth together in Mostar organized by the local youth theater,

and Pontanima, an interethnic, interfaith choir started shortly after the end of the war. The choir has used music to build connections among the core participants and also use music as a witness for peace to the larger society.

**Impact**

It is obvious that arts and peacebuilding projects have significant potential to foster relationship building and greater understanding between groups in a conflicted society. The participants involved in a particular process may experience change in their attitudes/beliefs and possibly behavior towards others. If an arts-based process involves a formal performance component, there may also be an impact on the audience witnessing the event.

* Written by Craig Zelizer, who completed his doctoral degree on The role of artistic processes in peacebuilding in Bosnia-Herzegovina (2004, Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, George Mason University). The author conducted fourteen months of field research between 2000-2001 in the area and interviewed 64 artists, peacebuilders, and scholars. Zelizer is presently Senior Partner at Alliance for Conflict Transformation (www.conflicttransformation.org, czelizer@conflicttransformation.org)

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**Conversation, Collaboration, and Culture: Peace festivals in Sierra Leone**

In 2001 Search for Common Ground in Sierra Leone (SFCG-SL) organized its first Peace Festival in Bo, Sierra Leone's southern capital. The festival focused on social reintegration issues and on the empowerment of youth in Bo. Helped by the famous Sierra Leoneon musician Steady Bongo and many local artists, this first Peace Festival was a resounding success, raising money for local youth organizations and providing a forum for discussing important local and national issues. Following the success of the first festival, SFCG-SL has made peace festivals an ongoing tool in its work in Sierra Leone, with annual festivals now in Bo, Makeni and Kenema.

**Philosophy**

Through entertainment, cultural expression, and dialogue, the festivals have created a forum for promoting social reintegration. Peace festivals:

. strengthen civil society and build trust, by promoting local collaboration between diverse interest groups;

. reach a wide audience with messages about social reintegration and coexistence;

. support local artists and provide a popular forum for cultural expression;

. raise money for local organizations;

. are peacebuilding activities in themselves;

. symbolize the return, and the significance, of indigenous culture;

. inspire hope that the return to normal life is possible.

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SFCG-SL works with local partners to adapt Festival themes to the context of the local community, allowing for local ownership of the process and ensuring that the needs of the host communities are met. Festivals have addressed topics such as organization and collaboration among youth, and maintaining post-conflict law and order.

**Methodology**

Peace festivals are alive with energy. Music floats through the air as people gather from miles around to watch, listen, dance and taste the joys of the festival. Old friends meet and new partnerships are formed. An intentional methodology has been developed for creating large-scale peace festivals in Sierra Leone, with each Festival becoming an exercise in collaborative problem solving

**Identifying Stakeholders**

Planning begins by identifying and recruiting interested stakeholders. These often include local partnership boards, chiefs, radio stations, youth organizations and political parties. In Makeni, considerable collaboration took place between the army and the police, who overcame long held differences to work together.

**Forming Committees**

After the stakeholders have met for discussions, representatives from local organizations are chosen to head committees charged with the festival planning process. These committees are

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responsible for finance, grounds, publicity, security, and organization. Youth organizations have a representative on each committee, allowing everyone to have a full stake and voice in the process.

**Organizing Musicians and Actors**

Local and national artists are selected in advance of the festivals to give them time to develop their programs on the central theme(s). Famous musician Steady Bongo and a team of organizers select the local dramatists and musicians to participate in the festivals. This artistic process has ensured that the festivals are entertaining celebrations as well as focused approaches to social reintegration.

**Dialogues and Radio Broadcasts**

The festivals are broadcast live throughout the region, and feature discussions with local representatives on important themes of social reintegration. These panel discussions and radio dialogues augment the messages embedded in the cultural activities.

**Moving Forward after the Festival**

At the conclusion of a festival finances must be accounted for and dispersed, creating another chance for partnership building. A committee is created to assess the festival, document the successes, and work towards constant improvement. Each organizing committee identifies a future event that benefits from the proceeds of the festival, and reports back to the community on

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the use of the funds and progress of the new project. This promotes greater transparency and accountability at the local level.

## Other SFCG Art and Peacebuilding Initiatives

### Angolan Peace Song

SFCG brought 35 Angolan musicians -- from both sides of the civil war -- to write and record an anthem for reconciliation. A Paz E Que O Povo Chama (People Are Calling For Peace) was recorded and launched at a peace concert in Luanda, and subsequently became one of the most frequently played songs on Angolan radio. In a society where music plays a vital role in social and political life, the commitment to peace and reconciliation by Angolan cultural icons sent a powerful message to the entire country.

### Sangwe Festivals in Burundi

SFCG has held two large scale peace festivals in Burundi's capital of Bujumbura. These four-day festivals for peace brought together hundreds of artists -- dancers, drummers, story tellers, bands, and drama troupes -- from throughout Burundi and the diaspora. Thousands of Burundians gathered peacefully to rock to the rhythms of dancers and sway to the sounds of music. The festival was broadcast throughout Burundi on radio and television.

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Common Ground Film Festival in Jerusalem

More than a thousand people attended the four-day festival in Jerusalem during one of the most tense times in the Middle East. The events were held at the historic YMCA, which is one of the rare places in Israel that still has Arab/Israeli programming, including an Arab-Israeli kindergarten. The films were followed by discussions between the filmmakers and the audience, about the topics shown in the films. The conversations were often difficult and emotional, but audience members expressed their gratitude for the opportunity to come together, in a mixed audience, to discuss the difficulties and challenges facing them.
The United Nations will bring the Common Ground Film Festival to the UN in New York, starting in February 2005.

**Music Videos**

SFCG has found that musicians can reach large segments of a society, particularly youth, in extraordinary ways. Musicians have become their country's cultural icons and are emulated by their young fans. SFCG music projects include:
Macedonia: a music video with two young singers -- a Macedonian and an Albanian -- singing the theme song from Nashe Maalo (Our Neighborhood), an SFCG produced children's television series that encourages intercultural understanding in an ethnically polarized society. The two singers appear together and sing in each other's language along with the children from the TV series.

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Indonesia: an interethnic group of some of the country's biggest stars joined together to record a song calling for peaceful national elections, entitled: "As Long As We Choose the Peaceful Way".

Middle East: two of the biggest Israeli and Palestinian stars recorded the theme song from the new Middle East SFCG documentary TV series. They poignantly sing about a future where life can be lived with all its possibilities.

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**Resources**

**Lead organizations**

CompArt – The Netherlands

For contact, please visit website

http://www.compart-foundation.org

Peace Troupe – USA

peacetroupe@culturalanimator.org

http://peacetroupe.org

Search for Common Ground – USA

search@sfcg.org

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http://www.sfcg.org

Warchild –United Kingdom

info@warchild.org.uk

http://www.warchild.org

**Additional websites**

http://www.communityarts.net/readingroom

Brings together information and organizations around arts and development, community strengthening and civic dialogue.

http://www.americansforthearts.org/animatingdemocracy

Animating Democracy: Strengthening the role of the arts in civic dialogue

http://www.creativexchange.org

Creative Exchange – Network of organizations involved in arts, culture and development

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## 12.1 Using Creative Arts to De-Glamorize Warfare: Peacelinks in Sierra Leone

***In Sierra Leone, there's little chance of stifling a rich tradition of artistic expression. Neither colonial antipathy to Sierra Leone's visual and performing artists, nor the hard economic times of the 1980s, nor the civil war of the 1990s have stilled their creative output. Barely two years after the end of a devastating civil war, the capital Freetown is once again awash with performing artists, alive with music emanating from recording studios.*** By Vandy Kanyako***

The arts have survived because art is integral to the lives of Sierra Leone's people. Music and dance are the driving forces, ever-present at work, worship, weddings, and funerals. From the cradle to the grave, singing and dancing are linked to every facet of Sierra Leonean life. They are powerful vehicles that have been used for generations to entertain, educate, and transmit historical events. Most importantly, songs have been used over the years to cement national unity and rouse people to action. For a country that has witnessed its fair share of political unrest and civil strife, the need for the arts to bring together fractured communities and heal the ravages of war cannot be over-emphasized.

**<Box>**

**A vicious civil war**

Sierra Leone was plunged into a vicious civil war in 1991. The war quickly spread, drawing mostly young people, who form an estimated 55 percent of the country's population, into a

vortex of tragic violence. Politically marginalized and constantly afflicted by grinding poverty and a chronic shortage of work, youths had, prior to the war, constituted an energetic but disgruntled class itching for the opportunity to redress what was perceived as years of gross imbalance and injustice.

With the war came a sort of outlet. Often cajoled and coerced, many of teenagers — and some children as young as eight — joined the warring factions. Indeed, these disenchanted youngsters formed the core of the rebellion that disastrously engulfed the country. An estimated 70,000 people lost their lives and more than 2.6 million of the country's 4.7 million population were displaced. More than 9,000 children were maimed, orphaned or separated from their parents.

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In response to the ravages of the war in general and its effects on children in particular, grassroots civil society organizations have emerged embracing both conventional and unconventional approaches to healing and reconciliation. Amongst these groups is Peacelinks, a nonprofit, non-denominational organization made up entirely of young people who have utilized the arts to help other young people overcome their war trauma, learn new skills and lead productive lives.

Peacelinks was born out of the chaos and uncertainties of the 1990s as a direct response to the marginalization of young people and the terrible effect of the war on children. Comprising largely of ex-child combatants, displaced children, amputees and street children, the group uses visual and performing arts including painting, drawing, music, dance, and drama to not only help traumatized children recover from their spiritually debilitating experiences but also to comment

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on social issues such as violence, poverty, discrimination, hunger, illiteracy, joblessness and military recruitment. The group uses creative arts to "de-glamorize" warfare and to bridge the gap between the "victim", be that a displaced person or amputee, and the former child combatant, "perpetrator". Through the arts the organization creates symbols of national consciousness that reinforces patriotism, peace, love, unity and hope.

Peacelinks was formed with three main aims:

. Empowerment: From its inception Peacelinks aimed to raise awareness about the dangers of youth militarization and hence to empower young people for positive change. By imparting new skills, the organization gave young people a sense of empowerment and inspired others to use their creative talents and energy for constructive rather than destructive purposes. To this effect most of the organization's volunteer projects have been carried out in communities with large concentrations of deprived and at-risk children.

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. Reconciliation: Peacelinks aimed to bridge the gap between communities and to heal the wounds of war. The group uses art that specifically carried messages of healing and nonviolence aimed at restoring the trust and confidence that are so essential to closely-knit societies. The group creates songs and choreographs dances which utilize symbolic gestures, costumes and other visual devices to communicate the message of peace and reconciliation. And by bringing together children from all the warring factions and all socio-economic backgrounds, Peacelinks vividly demonstrated to the adult community the possibility of reconciliation between former adversaries.

. Influencing policy: With local and international partners including UNICEF, Amnesty International, United Network of Young Peacebuilders, and others, Peacelinks aims to influence government policy on issues of general concern to youths. The group campaigns against child recruitment, and to end the service of those already in the ranks, by organizing art exhibitions and seminars, writing newspaper articles, participating in radio discussions, and performing on national television.

**Passionate Singing**

Peacelinks was formed in 1990 by two Sierra Leonean teenagers after returning from an international children's peace conference in Vermont, USA. The group started with ten children who met once a week for lively discussions on productive ways of engaging the skills of young people, and who followed their meetings with passionate singing. These weekly meetings proved popular and attracted more young people. Soon, the membership had expanded to fifty mainly at-

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risk children: street kids, students from various socio-economic backgrounds, and a sprinkling of displaced and ex-child combatants, mainly from the Liberian civil war.

The discussions resulted in two concrete projects: community volunteering and creative arts for peacebuilding. An organization was set up and the group embarked on community outreach activities by which members volunteered once a month to clean up public places such as parks, hospitals and community centers, and to plant trees in environmentally-degraded areas.

But the outbreak of the civil war in 1991 fundamentally changed the composition and activities of the organization. The war produced a new class of disadvantaged children (displaced children, amputees and ex-child combatants), many parentless and traumatized, with unique needs. Many of these children had arrived in the city unaccompanied and settled in communities where Peacelinks was already active. In 1992 ten ex-child combatants who had learned of the existence of Peacelinks joined the organization. By 1994 more than half of the 100 members were children with direct experience in the war. Their real life traumatic experiences provided the rich materials for the songs, dances, paintings, and drawings for which Peacelinks gained national and international recognition. Through the words, songs and visual images of children who had experienced the war first hand, Peacelinks was able to dramatize its effects on these children.

## The Program

Once it had determined just what it wished to accomplish, Peacelinks drew up a program consisting of four principal components: outreach programs, recordings, art exhibitions, and leadership skills training.

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Outreach: Peacelinks uses art to communicate messages of peace, reconciliation and hope to communities that had been hard hit by the war. The group performed free concerts in schools, refugee camps, interim care centers and other locations around the war-scarred capital. The idea was not only to entertain but also to open channels of communication among various constituencies that had developed in the course of the war. By bringing ex-child combatants to communities they had once terrorized, and where they were now both feared and loathed, the outreach provided a platform for war-affected children to present their side of the story. As musicians, dancers and visual artists giving something back to these communities, the children could begin traveling the road to recovery and acceptance.

Music production: In order to further spread the message of peace and reconciliation, and to raise funds, Peacelinks made numerous recordings of original songs, beginning in 1996 with a recording entitled Believe in Peace. Torch of Love followed in 1999 and Reconciliation in 2002. Children are the Future highlighted the potential of young people as agents of positive change. Disarm was a direct call to the leaders to disarm child combatants. Songs in both English and native languages were recorded. Each of the albums became a best seller in Sierra Leone and thus a source of income and publicity for the organization.

**Reconciliation (Key-G-minor)**

*Chorus* Reconciliation

It requires patience

It requires waiting

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It is good for lasting peace **(**X4)

*Solo 1* Now my brothers

Let us learn to forgive one another

And bury the hatchet

And then turn to a new page

*All* Oh-oh-oh-oh (A-new—page)

This is what we need

For peace to prevail in this land

So we can come together and

Rebuild our land

*Chorus (X4)*

*Solo 2* Reconciliation

That is what the children need

So we should try

And make it a reality

*All* Oh-oh-oh-oh (Re-a-li-ty)

Put aside all hatred

And forget about the past

So we can come together

And rebuild our land

*Chorus (x4)*

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Art exhibitions: Peacelinks periodically organizes art exhibitions that reflects the war experiences of the children. The organization offers the opportunity to children to tell their stories through paintings, drawings and wood carvings reflecting a wide range of emotions: sadness and happiness, hate and love, war and peace, despair and hope. They have been frequently exhibited over the years and also attract the attention of researchers and organizations from around the world.

Community internship program: Peacelinks runs a community internship program for young people from various Freetown institutions interested in the arts for peace project. The beneficiaries are often directly selected by their communities or institutions and are provided with free hands-on training in music, painting, drawing, carving and other practical skills such as typing. They can then return to their communities with these skills both to empower others and to lead independent lives.

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**Added Value**

*Transformation*: Peacelinks brought the issue of child soldiers to the fore in a unique way. By transforming ex-child combatants from agents of destruction to messengers of peace, and by nurturing their talents and honing their skills, the organization helps change society's negative perception and morbid fear of war-affected children. Peacelinks also goes beyond reintegration and resettlement by helping these children to become active members of their communities and positive role models.

*Peace music*: Peacelinks popularized the concept of peace music with songs conceived, created and performed with the sole aim of easing tension and building friendship. They stress the lyrical message as much as melody and rhythm, touching on crucial issues in ways that steer clear of divisive politics, in several languages, incorporating images and sounds that the audience identifies with peace and unity.

*Art as a multi-purpose peace-building tool*: Peacelinks uses art as the main vehicle to achieve multiple aims. The organization utilized the medium not only to unite fractured communities and empower and heal traumatized children, but also to raise funds and teach life skills to at-risk youths.

*Imparting values:* Peacelinks training emphasizes respect for individual opinions and group decisions. All programs are planned and implemented as a group with appointed committees

fine-tuning the details and reporting back to the general membership for further comments and recommendations. In this way members learn such important societal values as consensus building, cooperation, patience and respect. Especially for ex-child soldiers, learning these values of give and take and group process are vital if they are to successfully adjust to civilian life.

**Challenges**

In the course of the war, insecurity was a huge problem and severely hindered the organization's operations. Activities were frequently postponed, suspended, or cancelled due to fighting in or around Freetown. For example, in January 1999, during the invasion of the capital, an outreach team of more than twenty members was detained at a pro-government military checkpoint for hours. The same month, the office was vandalized.

When law and order broke down, as happened so very often in the course of the war, some children were easily enticed to re-join one or another of the fighting forces. More than ten ex-child combatants with whom the organization had worked were re-abducted and re-armed.

For the wider society there is a stigma associated with being a former child combatant. As such some parents of Peacelinks members were very reluctant in the beginning to allow their children to closely associate with these children. Their stance softened with time, but the attitude was all too prevalent and still persists in some quarters today.

**Conclusions**

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*Benefits of diversity*: Joint programs for youths from diverse backgrounds are extremely important in the rehabilitation and reintegration of ex-child combatants. With a large concentration of former child soldiers, the children will tend to adhere to behaviors learned as fighters; but when they are in groups with other children from diverse backgrounds they will be more likely to modify those behaviors.

*Overcoming preconceived notions*: It became apparent that with the right kind of approach and dialogue with the community, people are willing to let go of their preconceived notions. As people came to understand that these children were as much victims as they were perpetrators, they slowly let go of their misconceptions about war-affected children. The right approach also involves constant dialogue with the community leaders.

*Social support networks*: Other social support networks such as family and school are extremely important in the process of helping the children regain their dignity. We found out that children who had such support had a less difficult time than peers who didn't.

*Youth mentorship*: Children tend to more easily talk about their traumatic experiences with other young people than with their elders. They stated this frequently. Many cited the long history of distrust that exists between youths and the elderly based on a culture in which children are expected to obey without question.

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**Next Steps**

Peacelinks has grown from a youth group of ten members in 1990 to a full-fledged community-based organization with a staff of ten assisted by twenty volunteers, a board of directors, and a two-story office building in the heart of the city. As the organization has gained recognition it has attracted financial and technical support from a variety of sources around the world.

The organization is now regularly consulted by UN agencies and international organizations on various peace-building issues. In 2000 the organization worked closely with the Civil Affairs Section of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone to develop youth radio discussion programs for the UN's Peace FM radio station. In May 2004 *Radio Nederland* began discussions with the group and other partners about the possibility of establishing community-based FM radio stations in the country. In spite of these major developments the organization still remains a youth-led venture. All projects are still planned and implemented by the young people, with the supervision of an adult board.

Sierra Leone has stepped back from the brink of a great abyss. But dangers still lurk and much work must be done to cement a secure future. Naturally, Peacelinks is only one small part of the massive project, but it is an important one. What Peacelinks demonstrates is that even in difficult times, one can be optimistic about the resiliency of youth. And that is a good thing, for the future success of Sierra Leone is inextricably linked to the success of its youth in rebuilding a country that has been so terribly devastated in the recent past.

** Vandy Kanyako is the founder and former executive director of Peacelinks. Presently he works for the New York-based Conflict Prevention Working Group, the UN arm of the Global*

*Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC). He is the coordinator of the international conference on the Role of Civil Society to Prevent Armed Conflict, which will be held at UN Headquarters in July 2005.*

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## 12.2 Artistic Responses to the Siege of Sarajevo: The Cellist and the Film Festival in Bosnia Herzegovina

***While the beautiful, historic city of Sarajevo was under siege, the everyday lives of people were torn apart. Some wondered whether it would ever be possible to heal the scars of such a suffering. Yet, the Sarajevan people proved to be stronger and found ways to pull though. Using their artistic expressions, they responded to the violence they were forced to live with. When twenty-two of his fellow citizens were killed in the early days of the siege of Sarajevo, cellist Vedran Smailovic responded by taking his cello to the spot of the massacre and playing for the following twenty-two days in their honor. It was a gesture that inspired not only the people of Sarajevo, but the entire caring world.***

The first Sarajevo Film Festival also took place during the siege. It has grown into the biggest and most important film festival in Southeastern Europe. Organizing the festival in those dark days was a statement – reminiscent of the earlier statement of cellist Vedran Smailovic — that it might be possible to murder Sarajevo's citizens, but not to kill its spirit.

### Hopeful Note in a Time of War

Vedran Smailovic is a cellist. In fact, in 1992, at the age of thirty-six, he was accomplished enough to serve as the principal cellist for the Sarajevo Opera Company. He came from a family of musicians who toured Yugoslavia under the moniker *Musica Ad Hominem* ("Music for the

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people") taking their music to small villages, often putting together special programs for children.

Vedran Smailovic would likely have remained just one of many thousands of talented but anonymous cellists in the world but for the accident of his birthplace — Sarajevo — and his response to the slaughter that occurred in his town beginning in the spring of 1992. The siege of Sarajevo had been underway for about a month, already many had died, and the infrastructure of the city had been severely damaged. Rations were in short supply, and basic commodities, including bread, were hard to come by. At four in the afternoon on May 27, in Vase Miskina Street in central Sarajevo, a few hundred meters from Smailovic's home, several shells lobbed from the hills by Serb gunners exploded as the city's residents waited patiently in a bread line. Twenty-two people were killed and more than 100 were wounded.

The next day, at four in the afternoon, Vedran Smailovic appeared in Vase Miskina Street, carrying his cello, dressed in the formal evening jacket and white tie he customarily wore when performing for the Opera. Despite the carnage of the previous day, there was, once again, a line of people waiting to buy bread. He planted a simple chair in one of the bomb craters and began playing *Albinoni's Adagio*, music which he has described as "the saddest music I know". On each of the following twenty-one days — twenty-two day to honor the memories of the twenty-two Sarajevans who had died — Smailovic returned to the spot of the massacre, even as the shelling continued, to serenade those fellow citizens who braved the snipers and the mortar fire.

When a reporter from CNN asked him whether he was not crazy sitting there playing while the bombardments sustained, Vedran Smailovic replied;

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*"You ask me am I crazy for playing the cello, why do you not ask if they are crazy for shelling Sarajevo?"*

It is doubtful whether Vedran Smailovic managed to save a single life, shorten the Bosnian war or speed the end of the siege of Sarajevo by even one day. Almost certainly, his brave actions made little impression on the Serb gunners who continued their merciless shelling of Sarajevo from the hilltops surrounding that city — if they were aware of his existence at all. He did not see himself as a peacebuilder. Yet his story has been often repeated and his actions have been held up to the world as a symbol of inspiring courage and nonviolent resistance in the face of horrible violence and human suffering.

Smailovic never claimed that he was doing anything extraordinary. In fact, when asked about it by *New York Times* reporter John Burns, he downplayed his action.

"My mother is a Muslim and my father is a Muslim, but I don't care. I am a Sarajevan, I am a cosmopolitan, I am a pacifist. I am nothing special, I am a musician, I am a part of the town. Like everyone else, I do what I can."

Yet doing what he could made an enormous impression. Which, in a sense, begs the question. What should we make of ordinary people who, in extraordinary circumstances do what would otherwise be ordinary things? What is the value of a gesture of defiance, when it is not going to change the outcome, and it certainly is not going to restore to life and to wholeness those who have been killed and maimed? Where does such an individual act of defiance fit within the traditions of conflict resolution and peacemaking? How should we view such a lonely expression of indignation?

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Vedran Smailovic's most immediate impact was on his own neighbors. Sarajevo is a city whose history dates back more than five hundred years, and which had been a symbol of religious and ethnic harmony. It had survived two world wars almost unscathed and served as host to the Winter Olympics in 1984.

However, now it was suffering an indignity that no one who had lived there could have imagined. By refusing to give in to the terror, Smailovic was making a statement, also on behalf of his fellow Sarajevans that: they can kill some of us, but they cannot kill our spirit and they cannot rob us of our dignity or our humanity. A very important message, at that early stage, when it was not clear if the city would be able to hold out against the Serbs, or even if it did, whether there would be much of Sarajevo left.

Smailovic made the right gesture at the right moment. The siege continued for more than a thousand days, claiming 10,000 lives, and causing enormous physical destruction. Many who could did flee the city, and yet those who remained and survived managed to confront the terror and the fear, to do their jobs, to find ingenious ways to hold their lives and their families together, to publish newspapers and keep radio and television stations on the air throughout the siege, to organize concerts, theater performances, and films, and even to laugh a bit at the absurdity of their existence. Returning, as Smailovic said "to beauty of a life without fear.". Not, of course, because of Vedran Smailovic alone, but because of a state of mind that his action embodied, and which was embraced by his fellow Sarajevans over the subsequent forty-four months.

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Still, Smailovic also had a wider impact. In fact, it could be said that those unamplified notes played in Sarajevo's devastated center truly were heard around the world. In that sense, the effect was of an absurdly quiet and dignified scream:

"Look what they are doing to us. We are civilized, peace loving people. We just want to go about our business. And they are blowing us to bits."

There is a curious irony in the story of Vedran Smailovic. The notes he played in May and June 1992 quickly faded away. There are no recordings of those twenty-two *Adagios*. Yet the story of the Cellist of Sarajevo has been told and retold. The power of the story has been such that an English composer named David Wilde wrote a piece, dedicated to Smailovic, which has been performed and recorded by the celebrated cellist Yo Yo Ma, who described Smailovic as "a real, present-day hero" who showed that "an individual can make a difference in the world." The Cellist of Sarajevo has been cited in sermons and works of fiction.

It has touched many thousands — perhaps millions — of people, evoked many emotions, perhaps been the impetus for reflection and an incremental increase in kindness between neighbors — maybe even between adversaries, and just possibly moved some to work for peace and reconciliation who might never have considered it otherwise. In other words, Smailovic's very personal action has, in ways that he probably never intended, ended up making a global impact.

There can hardly be a more compelling example of how a solitary fighter might embody the power of people's resistance than those adagios rising from the streets of Sarajevo in the spring of 1992.

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## Stimulating a Sense of Togetherness

***While the war in Bosnia is over, and the Sarajevo Film Festival is now primarily a vehicle for advancing the cinematic arts of the region, it has a special role to play in binding the wounds of wars, advancing regional cooperation and reconciliation, and promoting peace and human rights. The festival's year-round Traveling Cinema, which takes film to all corners of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and its Children's Festival, are both viewed as opportunities to promote multi-culturalism and reconciliation.***

The terror in Sarajevo had already lasted for forty-two months and claimed more than 10,000 lives. A few weeks earlier, a truce had been put in place — not the first time that the two sides had agreed to stop fighting — but truces had been agreed and violated many times in the past. So, when the first Sarajevo Film Festival opened on October 25, 1995, it was more than just another cultural event. Looking back, the organizers recall that that first festival "could have seemed more like a bizarre act of resistance than a real film festival." Though features were shown on big screens, many of the films came from the VHS collections of the organizers. Still, it was a serious effort, running for twelve days and featuring thirty-seven films from fifteen countries. More than 15,000 viewers attended the showings; every night was a sell-out.

### The War Years

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The terrible carnage which began in Sarajevo in April 1992 and raged throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina for four years was all the more horrific because it took place in a country that had always represented an oasis of tolerance and multiculturalism, where many nationalities and cultures had lived peacefully side by side for centuries.

Sarajevo's citizens attempted to carry on as best they could under the circumstances. In the midst of the shelling, they held a "Miss Besieged Sarajevo Pageant", (immortalized in a recording featuring Bono and Luciano Pavarotti) and renowned artists, including U2 and singer-activist Joan Baez performed in the besieged city.

The Obala Arts Center, a cultural organization long active in Sarajevo, organized exhibitions in its art gallery, and in cooperation with the Locarno and Edinburgh Film Festivals, screenings of independent and art films in improvised spaces. The screening rooms were always filled to their maximum capacity by an audience of all ethnic backgrounds, ages and religions for whom running through sniper fire to see a film was not really a political act defiance, but the manifestation of a very basic human need to express and reaffirm life.

The more formal launching of the Sarajevo Film Festival in October 1995 was, then, just an extension of what Obala had been doing informally throughout the previous three-plus years of the siege of Sarajevo.

Since the end of the war, the festival, with a total audience in excess of 100,000, has become a major cultural event in Bosnia-Herzegovina and has evolved into the largest film festival in the entire region, showcasing outstanding films of all sorts, but not to the exclusion of cinematic reflection on Sarajevo's own recent history. During the war, many of Sarajevo's citizens documented their experiences — sometimes with professional equipment, and sometimes with

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simple camcorders. The festival has provided opportunities to show many of these testimonials to the courage and endurance of the people of Sarajevo, including, for example, a program of shorts at the 1997 festival such as Seadi Hihad Kresevljakovic's "Do You Remember Sarajevo?" (1993-1995), a collection of moments capturing everyday life during the siege, showing the bombings and sniper attacks as well as the more intimate moments of joy among the surviving citizens; Nedzad Begovic's "War Art" (1993), which follows the work of craftsmen who took pieces of twisted debris and transformed them into objects of beauty, and Pjer Zalica's 1995 short "Children Like Any Other," which records the way in which kids were traumatized by the war. Features addressing the conflict have also been shown, including "The Perfect Circle" by Ademir Kenovic (1997), "Welcome to Sarajevo" (1996) by Michael Winterbottom and Danis Tanovic's Oscar-winning black comedy, "No Man's Land".

**Bringing Film to the Children**

One of the festival's other major efforts is to bring film to the children of Bosnia-Herzegovina. During the year, the festival's crew takes "The Traveling Cinema" to all parts of the country, particularly to areas of both the Republic of Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina where war damage to the cultural infrastructure has been most severe. Film showings in improvised theaters are offered at a symbolic charge and are available to the entire population – all nationalities and age groups – but with a focus on children and young people. According to the Children's Program director Susanne Prahl,

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"The program has two equally important goals: to enable children of BiH [Bosnia-Herzegovina] to be informed about the best children's movies produced recently and also to give the children of different ethnic backgrounds an opportunity to meet and thus stimulate the reconciliation in the country."

By showing films reflecting a wide variety of different cultures, the programmers believe they are promoting tolerance and expanding the horizons of those living in relatively closed communities. Where Serbs, Croats, and Bosnian Muslims come together to attend the festival programs, the festival is also promoting the slow process of reintegration and reconciliation. There is also an important educational function; prior to the screening of the main feature film, short films are screened on subjects such as mine-awareness, environmental protection, multiculturalism and tolerance, etc.

Quite apart from any considerations of the war experience, the Traveling Cinema gives kids a chance to move away from the streets and hopefully gives them ideas of other values and possibilities.

Throughout the year, the festival team makes arrangements for children from disadvantaged areas to visit the Children's Festival, which is an integral part of the Sarajevo Film Festival. In addition to film showings, many of which focus especially on the issues that concern kids like first love, drug abuse, growing pains, and tolerance for people of different religions and ethnic groups, the Children's Festival features guest appearances by actors appearing in some of the films, and additional sport and entertainment programs.

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**Cultural Nourishment**

In 2004, to mark the tenth anniversary of the launch of the Sarajevo Festival, it established a new Human Rights Award to pay tribute to artists from the region and the world who celebrate differences and teach the value of peace through the lens of the camera. The award is sponsored by the government of Switzerland. One objective is to generate substantial public and media interest in filmmakers who focus on ideas such as tolerance, multiculturalism, religious diversity, and peace education. Especially against the backdrop of the experiences of Sarajevo, and within the scope of the powerful medium of film, the award has particular significance.

Perhaps the best assessment of the special role the Sarajevo Film Festival has played and continues to play can be gleaned from the words of Caroline Schmidt Hornstein, head of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, who observed,

"Culture is nutrition: it nurtures fantasies, innovation, ideas of the possible, and a moral sense for the common good. The Sarajevo Film Festival is feeding it in the best of ways."

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**Resources (on the Sarajevo film festival)**

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# 13 Business: The Peacebuilding Potential of Local Businesses

Nick Killick and Canan Gündüz*

***The role of business in conflict areas has often been described in negative terms. There are, however, many ways in which local private companies and international corporations can contribute to the prevention or resolution of conflicts. Indeed, many such attempts have already been made. This chapter explores some of the roles that local business can play in a conflict context.***

International attention has turned in recent years towards the critical, some would argue decisive, role that economic factors play in driving and perpetuating contemporary violent conflicts. While the focus has been largely on the economic activities of combatants, especially the financing of rebel groups and economic gain as an incentive for perpetuating violence, the role of private sector actors in so-called war economies is becoming more and more prominent.

In particular the focus on the exploitation of natural resources in conflict zones has pointed out the often negative, conflict-feeding role that rich-country companies doing business in or with actors from conflict zones can have. This has been illustrated by the direct impacts of foreign-company operations on the ground in Nigeria and Sudan for instance, but also by the more indirect links of Western companies, through global supply chains for the production of consumer goods, with the negative effects of the mining of coltan in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

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Conversely, the role of local business actors has received very little attention so far, both in terms of negative impacts, but equally significantly, in terms of their contribution to conflict prevention and peacebuilding. As definitions of "civil society" continue to evolve, and as some important local business-led peacebuilding initiatives such as those profiled in this volume, begin to be recognized, deeper exploration of the peacebuilding potential of local businesses is required.

**Local Private Sector Actors**

Given that business is often a powerful actor in the political economy of war, and recovery from war, the notion of a peacebuilding role for business is clearly complicated. Some private sector actors will benefit from conflict, whether directly; by acting as suppliers to the army for example or by unfairly winning lucrative government contracts in an environment where transparency and competition are subordinated to the demands of maintaining security and power; or indirectly, by taking advantage of the confusion and chaos to make profits on the black market.

Besides those instances where business activities feed into or profit from violence, they may also sustain structural injustices that can fuel hostilities. Control of the land by big business in Colombia for example has been a critical factor in the conflict, as was the support provided by white-owned businesses to the apartheid regime in South Africa; the private sector in both Sri Lanka and Nepal can be seen as promoting or benefiting from a system which has historically excluded or failed large sections of the society.

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In addition, businesses or individual business leaders are likely to mirror or reinforce the conflict dynamics by, for example, employing one ethnic or religious group to the exclusion of another, or by competing for access to markets along social conflict lines.

These negative interactions between the private sector and conflict highlight that any peacebuilding strategy has to address local economic agendas in wars. This has to be based on a good understanding of the make up of the local private sector, which is diverse and does not have a uniform agenda, either in peace or in war. Local businesses range from large, often multinational enterprises, mostly based in national capitals, to regional actors such as chambers of commerce, to grassroots actors spanning small and medium enterprises down to individual market traders. Given the importance in developing countries of the informal sector, both in terms of holding assets and providing jobs and livelihoods for a majority of the population, it has to be included in this actor group.

Almost by definition then, local private sector actors are part of the existing conflict context. In a sense, it is this rooted relationship to the conflict that is crucial to local business playing a peacebuilding role – it constitutes a powerful section of society with linkages to different social and political actors and strata, through business relations or other linkages, including political, cultural, ethnic or religious. This highly "networked" position the private sector holds in its own society suggests a new addition to John Paul Lederach's three-tier understanding of the peacebuilding potential of societies1. Business people, represented at all levels, are strategically positioned to intervene in a variety of ways:

**< Insert Figure 13.1. Local Actors in Conflict Prevention and Resolution >**

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With this model in mind, it is possible to identify four conditions that can contribute to promoting and sustaining a role for local private sectors, broadly applicable to all sizes and types of business:

. Wide recognition of businesses' interest in peace

. An influential and diverse business sector – influential both in terms of political leverage and active engagement in social issues

. A (relatively) independent and positively perceived private sector

. Individual champions prepared to take a lead.

These factors point out some of the challenges and questions in promoting a peacebuilding role for the local business community: whether there is a strong argument for involving it, what is needed for creating or strengthening that argument further, in what ways it is best placed to contribute and what needs to be done to ensure it can maximize its contribution.

**Challenges**

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**Business interest**

As discussed above, some businesses actively benefit from conflict contexts. For most legal private sector activity however, conflict is bad for business. This is the fundamental motivation and justification for businesses' involvement in peacebuilding. Destruction of infrastructure, loss of a skilled workforce, withdrawal of foreign investment, prohibitive security and insurance costs, loss of markets, regulatory confusion and diminished support from the government all make doing business in conflict zones a matter of survival rather than growth.

There is much evidence from countries as diverse as South Africa, Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka and the Philippines to support the view that collective action is central to a successful and sustainable private sector intervention. Building such a coalition, however, requires broad recognition of the damaging impact of the conflict on individual businesses and the economic environment as a whole. Researching and publicizing the costs of the conflict to business can accelerate the emergence of a business case or interest in peace. Such an advocacy campaign can strengthen a sense of shared suffering and unity of purpose. In both Sri Lanka and Nepal, the publication of documents which outlined the costs of the respective conflicts provided an incentive for joint strategizing and action among the business community which otherwise might have taken much longer to bring about.

A lack of awareness and understanding of their own peacebuilding potential within the business community is partially to blame for the relative scarcity of examples of local business involvement in peace processes. Therefore raising awareness of successful initiatives from elsewhere (some are mentioned below) is another crucial dimension of making clear how peace is in the interest of business.2

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**Influential and Diverse Private Sector**

The better-connected business leaders are to conflict actors, the greater the potential for positively influencing the decision-making process. Equally, the greater the risk that influence might be exercised negatively. Nevertheless, the capacity of larger businesses to pressurize governments in particular provides a potential resource, which few other sectors can match. Understandably, there is frequently a reluctance to exercise that access and influence given the power which governments in turn exercise over business leaders' ability to carry on doing business. This emphasizes the importance of collective action involving a broad spectrum of businesses. The key is to identify ways in which the influence business leaders have can be directed towards peaceful ends.

**Independent and Positively Perceived Private Sector**

Legitimacy and impartiality are necessary attributes of any peacebuilding actor, including the local private sector. This is crucial for acceptance from conflicting parties as well as affected communities. Undoubtedly, acquiring such acceptance will be a challenge for business, especially where it has played, or is perceived to play, a role in perpetuating economic inequalities, has a history of colluding with corrupt officials, or exerts too much political influence in its own favor. Businesses' own linkages within their societies (mentioned above) may additionally feed into perceptions of partiality.

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Open dialogue with all relevant stakeholders, together with a clear statement of its own agenda and interest in peace, may help to overcome these difficulties. Businesses in Northern Ireland used this strategy to highlight the "peace dividend"; in South Africa, a number of business leaders were able to build trust over time with both sides on the basis that their agenda was clear and neutral.

**Individual Champions**

The success or failure of any peacebuilding initiative critically depends on the strengths and quality of the individuals leading it, including those from the private sector. Obtaining success require individuals willing and able to galvanize others in pursuit of a shared aim. These are people who can articulate the case for a wider private sector role in peacebuilding and convince doubters to engage; who can exercise their influence without fear of reprisal and are respected both amongst their peers and the wider society. Identifying and supporting such individuals is critical if the private sector is to fulfill its peacebuilding potential.

**Spheres of Engagement**

Every conflict context is unique, but by drawing on the lessons and experiences from countries where the private sector has played a constructive peacebuilding role, it is possible to identify different types of roles, which can be a useful guide and source of inspiration to others. They can be broken down into three categories:

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1. Core business – meaning the management of a company's operations

2. Social investment – contribution to development, social issues etc

3. Policy dialogue – influence at the policy level, institution-building etc

The most publicized experiences to date are those of big business, discussed in more detail below – less research has been undertaken into the role of provincial/regional businesses and grassroots/informal actors3. When looking at a peacebuilding role for businesses, it is crucial however to move beyond capital-based big businesses, which are often far removed from the actual locations where conflict is taking place.

**National Business**

**Core Business**

This covers a range of issues, including corporate governance, ethical business practices and internal policies and standards. It also includes relations with suppliers, job creation and investment, human resources and infrastructure development. In different ways, all these can be significant peacebuilding opportunities if approached in a way, which considers the potential relevance to and impact on the conflict. Equally, if neglected or pursued in a way, which is insensitive to the conflict dynamics, each of these can generate mistrust and resentment.
The core business of any business is generating wealth. Therefore, shared economic activity across real or potential conflict lines is a crucial contribution the private sector can make. It

serves to promote reconciliation and creates a sense of mutual dependency; and, crucially: much-needed jobs. The US corporation Peaceworks for example has worked since 1994 to establish joint business ventures across the conflict line between Arabs and Israelis, to source gourmet food and other goods for its diverse range of products. This joint business model has since been applied in other conflict contexts, such as Guatemala and Mexico.

On the road to creating wealth, any business should take a good hard look at its own conduct. In recent years, a whole body of literature and practice has evolved around what is known as corporate social responsibility (CSR). Whilst the CSR debate remains a predominantly Northern pre-occupation, its importance for countries experiencing violent conflict may be significant. Sound internal policies and standards are key for a sustainable peacebuilding role for businesses. The reasons for this are threefold:

firstly, it is problematic to try to engage business in something as sensitive as peacebuilding if some of the fundamentals of socially responsible business are neglected;

secondly, many of the tenets of responsible business can in themselves support peacebuilding, for example, through addressing corruption or embedding fair employment practices in countries where nepotism and discrimination may be factors in the conflict;

thirdly, commitment to CSR principles may help to change negative perceptions of business as part of the problem. This is a crucial element if other stakeholders are to trust businesses' peacebuilding efforts.

A critical aspect of a company's CSR is its employment policies: a business, which deliberately or unintentionally discriminates against one group or another, is feeding and perpetuating

hostilities. Conversely, an active policy of recruiting from disadvantaged groups and providing the requisite training may, in a small but significant way, contribute to peace. In some contexts, the workplace is the only sphere where divided communities actually meet. This offers tremendous opportunities for reconciliation: in Northern Ireland for instance, the non-governmental organization Counteract provides training, advisory and research services to develop practical ways to develop more neutral and diverse cultures in the workplace.

The key point here is to highlight that peacebuilding need not be purely 'political' but can fall directly within the mandate and core competencies of the private sector. All of the examples above illustrate that companies have the capacity to contribute whilst remaining firmly within their own sphere of control.

**Social Investment**

Beyond core business activities, many companies are in a position to provide funds to address deep-rooted socio-economic challenges such as poverty and lack of education. Although this should not be seen as the sum of the private sector's role, it can be important. While the private sector may make useful contributions to some development issues, from a peacebuilding perspective, it has to be assessed whether such interventions address rather than exacerbate root conflict causes. There is much that the private sector can do to support education and health programs, local enterprise development etc but these should be targeted in ways which focus on groups or issues particularly pertinent to the conflict itself and which utilize the added value of the private sector. In the Philippines, Philippine Business for Social Progress works to address

structural conflict causes such as underdevelopment and lack of employment. In South Africa, the National Business Initiative's Business Trust, managed jointly by business and government representatives, channels funds towards pressing social needs that still divide South African society, for example job creation and schooling.

Beyond financial resources, the private sector is a repository of skills and experience that lend themselves directly to addressing some of the structural deficiencies within society. In other words, companies have tremendous human resources, which can support the capacity building and professionalization of NGOs and public institutions.

**Policy Dialogue**

Policy dialogue and peace advocacy are another area of possible engagement. This builds on the capacity of the private sector to influence others, which may be harnessed for useful ends. Although policy advocacy is an area most businesses would shy away from, there are many opportunities for utilizing this strength of the business community: no sector has such expertise in publicity and media campaigns for instance. In Sri Lanka, this potential was used by Sri Lanka First, and directed towards mobilizing society in demanding a peaceful end to the conflict. In 1994, the Northern Ireland Confederation of British Industry widely publicized a "peace dividend paper", which spelled out the economic costs of conflict, and projected the economic and social benefits of peace, in terms of freeing up public money for the provision of social services etc. It generated much discussion, and other stakeholders adopted the term "peace dividend".

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Some businesses have even engaged as brokers between conflicting sides, similar to traditional conflict resolution: in South Africa, the business community engaged in a lengthy and patient period of relationship-building with both sides of the conflict, enabling it to play a key role in providing technical, logistical and administrative support to the peace process, an often under-estimated need which speaks directly to the skills and resources of many companies. Also the business-sponsored British Angola Forum has played a significant role in bringing together all sides in the Angolan conflict in an informal setting. Today, the Forum continues its work in getting all stakeholders in Angola's future to work towards a more equitable distribution of the country's enormous wealth.

**Regional and Grassroots Business Actors**

Many of the recommendations above are also relevant for regional and grassroots business actors although these actors are more likely to struggle against the day-to-day challenges of doing business in the midst of a conflict, which provides them with a different set of challenges and opportunities. They are perhaps more committed to restoring peace (and so more inclined to work together), more in touch with suffering of the wider population (and therefore more aware of their needs) and closer to those actually doing the fighting (more exposed to the dangers but also better placed to make a difference on the ground).

In Sri Lanka, for example, the Business for Peace Alliance is the only body bringing together representatives from regional chambers of commerce of all provinces, both Tamil and Sinhalese. The group fosters island-wide business-to-business relationships and reconciliation, seeks to

generate peace dividends at the local level, and advocates for greater regional involvement in the peace process.

Likewise grassroots actors such as market traders are often in a good position to mediate community-level disputes. Indeed, business leaders in small towns or villages can be de facto community leaders respected by all parties. During violent conflict, continued interaction between grassroots actors in the economic sphere may be the only lines of communication left open between two sides.

Sadakhlo, an unofficial outdoors market in the South Caucasus, situated on Georgian territory bordering both Azerbaijan and Armenia, is one example: Armenians and Azeris have been trading on the market since the early 1990s, despite the official economic blockade between the two countries. The market on third-country territory provides a "safe space" for ethnic Azeris and Armenians to meet and exchange, where the topic of politics is carefully avoided.4

It should also be stressed that the knowledge and experience of business leaders at these levels can be a valuable resource when it comes to designing economic development plans for the country. Misguided ideas imposed from central government which fail to acknowledge or address real needs can be themselves a source of conflict and certainly a trigger for a return to conflict, highlighting the need for the participation of businesses of all types. It is well understood amongst development actors that local ownership is key to making development work. Businesses can not only support this but also facilitate it based on the same principle noted earlier; namely convening power and (potentially) relative impartiality.

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**Identifying Partners**

Although rarely seen as such, the private sector is a part of civil society and needs to act in concert with other sectors, such as local and international NGOs and others, in order to lend its interventions credibility and a wider mandate, and to strengthen both its specific impact and the collective impact of any wider peace movement. For this to happen, the private sector needs to engage in proper consultation and relationship-building, to identify its niche, provide support to the initiatives of others, and perhaps most importantly, to develop the trust necessary to making a positive contribution.

The international community represents both a potential partner and a valuable supporter of business and peace initiatives. Bi- and multilateral donors and international NGOs are usually the main source of support to countries in conflict and have peacebuilding agendas of their own. International actors can be instrumental in galvanizing and encouraging a peacebuilding role for the private sector. To date, however, they have been slow to recognize the private sector's potential, focusing almost exclusively on business as an agent of economic development rather than peacebuilding. Moreover, the international community has to be aware of the negative impacts of its own engagement with the local private sector, even through attempts to address conflict have taken place. For example, the international pressure to get Western governments and companies to completely disengage from the coltan trade with the DRC, while seeking to minimize the negative impact of mineral extraction, overlooks the many livelihoods in the DRC that depend on it informally, and which would be imperiled by a complete truncation of the trade. An approach that is more accommodating to local needs and the local conflict context is required in such cases.

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Equally, the view that private sector development is good for economic growth, poverty reduction, and therefore by implication in the longer-term for peace, has to be assessed critically from a conflict transformation perspective. It needs to be considered who benefits from such economic development assistance, who loses out, and how these impacts can exacerbate tensions. While "conflict-sensitivity" is becoming more and more integrated into mainstream development assistance, it has not yet made its way into interventions promoting private sector development. This is an area that requires more research and awareness raising.

**Conclusion**

Over the last fifteen years, the shift in the geo-political environment which has seen a clear change in the nature of contemporary conflicts, away from inter-state wars to almost exclusively internal conflicts (although with regional and international repercussions), has been accompanied by a parallel shift in attitudes and approaches to conflict resolution and peacebuilding. What was once seen as the preserve of states and multilateral bodies such as the UN is now seen as a multifaceted process which attempts to draw in a broad range of sectors, groups and individuals from the grassroots to the highest levels. Surprisingly, however, this process has yet to include in any systematic or consistent way the role of local private sectors. This despite the clear examples, some of which are illustrated in this paper, of the valuable role that the private sector can play.

This gap in peacebuilding theory and practice may partly stem from the traditional reluctance of the private sector itself, partly from the greater focus on multinational companies, partly from the historically troubled relationship between NGOs and the private sector and partly also from the

perceptions of the private sector as more often a negative rather than positive influence on conflict. This last point is particularly understandable but, as this paper has tried to show, it is not only a good reason in itself for attempting to define and encourage a greater peacebuilding role for the private section, it is also an one-dimensional view.

Clearly, the negative should not be ignored but nor should it serve to mask the positive. In drawing together the lessons from the experience there has been, it is possible to identify a set of basic principles which provide a framework for those, whether within or outside business, who are trying to identify and promote the private sector's engagement in peacebuilding:

. *Leadership* - identifying individuals willing and able to galvanize others;

. *Analysis* - both from within the private sector itself of its role in the conflict dynamics and from outside to understand the different interests, capacities and resources;

. *Trust/Relationships* – as much as possible with all sectors and parties. Fundamental to promoting the credibility to intervene and the impartiality to be most effective;

. *Adaptability/flexibility* – ability to adjust according to changing circumstances;

. *Added value* – identifying and utilizing the particular skills, expertise, resources and leverage of the private sector;

. *Long-term commitment* – acknowledging the importance of a sustained engagement.

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*Nick Killick is the manager of International Alert's Business & Conflict program. Nick has been working on business and conflict issues, including both the role of multi-national companies and local business, for over 5 years. He has researched and developed projects focused on promoting a peacebuilding role for the private sector in the South Caucasus, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Burundi and the Gulf of Guinea.*

**Notes**

1 Adapted from John Paul Lederach (1997): Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies (Washington D.C., US: US Institute of Peace Press)

2 For more detailed case studies, see the upcoming Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation article on local businesses and peacebuilding.

3 Building on its field work with local business actors in Sri Lanka and Nepal, International Alert has just begun a large comparative research project seeking to deepen understanding of this important new area of peacebuilding.

4 International Alert and Economy and Conflict Research Group of the South Caucasus (2004): From War Economies to Peace Economies in the South Caucasus (London, UK: International Alert).

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**Resources**

**Lead organizations**

Collaborative for Development Agency – USA

Corporate Engagement Project

cda@cdainc.com

http://www.cdainc.com

Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy – USA

Business and Peacebuilding initiative

imtd@imtd.org

http://www.imtd.org

International Alert – United Kingdom

Business and Conflict Programme

general@international-alert.org

http://www.international-alert.org/policy/business.htm

The Center for Business Diplomacy – Switzerland

For contact, please visit website

http://www.bizdiplomacy.org

The Prince of Wales International Business Leaders Forum – United Kingdom

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Business and Peace programme

info@iblf.org

http://www.iblf.org

**Additional websites**

http://www.business-humanrights.org

The business and human rights resource centre

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## 13.1 Brokering Peace and Building the Nation: National Business Initiative in South Africa

***Ending apartheid and establishing a multi-racial democracy in South Africa was a difficult and often violent process. One difficulty throughout the process was to find "honest brokers" to keep the process moving forward and retain the confidence of all major actors. An association of progressive South African business leaders played such a role. Its successor organization focuses on promoting sustainable development.*** By André Fourie*

Tens of thousands of people turned up at the Union Building amphitheatre in Pretoria, South Africa on April 27, 2004, to join visiting African leaders, former President Nelson Mandela, and other dignitaries, for the inauguration of President Thabo Mbeki to a second term in office. The occasion also marked Freedom Day - ten years since white minority rule ended. President Mbeki captured the mood evoked by the commemoration of this day in a speech highlighting both past achievements and difficulties, and daunting current challenges. He said:

"Endemic and widespread poverty continues to disfigure the face of our country. It will always be impossible for us to say that we have fully restored the dignity of all our people as long as this situation persists."

For business leaders who helped foster the climate that made possible a peaceful transition from apartheid to democracy, such words echoed their own concerns. In the 1980s and 1990s, working

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through the Consultative Business Movement (CBM), progressive businessmen used their neutral status to work as mediators.

Now they have a new body and a different purpose. Through the National Business Initiative (NBI), set up in March 1995, the business community is engaged in programs to create jobs and develop skills to enhance political and economic stability.

**An Unlikely Coalition**

In the spring of 1991, a year after the African National Conference (ANC) had been "unbanned" by South Africa's white minority government, a mood of pessimism prevailed in South Africa. The government and the ANC had been talking for a year, and had reached some bilateral agreements, but negotiations on substantive issues to end apartheid had stalled. Worse yet, President F.W. de Klerk's failure to consult with the ANC before issuing a call to hold a peace conference had so angered the ANC that it was considering to boycott it. The entire process was threatening to end in a downward spiral of mistrust, chaos and violence. What saved the process at the time, and helped to restore the trust that was need to bring a peaceful transition to multi-racial government, was a timely intervention by an unlikely coalition between the South African Council of Churches, which had often acted as a peacebroker, and CBM, the organization of progressive South African business leaders. This organization had cautiously begun to consult with political leaders on all sides during the 1980s, and in so doing, it had developed both the relationships and the credibility to play a vital role in the coming transformation process.

**The Business Case for Peace**

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In South Africa, businesses came first to understand that they themselves could benefit by helping to bring peace and a stable environment, and later on, they began to see, in concrete terms, the benefits accruing first off from an end to violence, and in the longer term, from democratization and socio-economic development. In particular, business benefited straight away by avoiding the added costs of conflict including damage to the corporate reputation, security costs, an unstable environment, a premium required on investment returns, the opportunity cost of uncertainty, litigation, insurance premiums and the impact on its employees. It should be noted that the power of multinationals to influence local groupings and governments is often over-estimated by outsiders and the risk of being seen to interfere or to take sides is very real. Few companies are keen to raise their profiles at the risk of being targeted. The South African case demonstrates that it is often more effective for businesses to participate collectively to promote dialogue and institution building. Working in partnership with government institutions and other stakeholders, business coalitions can play a role in addressing some of the structural issues underpinning conflict without raising suspicions that a particular company may be aiming to gain individual advantage.

**A South African case study**

Major corporations in South Africa have a long history of social engagement. The negative domestic impact of the apartheid system on the socio-economic and business environment and the international isolation of South Africa demanded a unique response from the South African business community. Accordingly, the private sector has undertaken initiatives to address such matters as housing, education, training, the political transition process, the 1994 electoral

process, crime prevention, local economic development and effective local governance. The business sector has played a remarkable role in support of the democratization process; it forged relations with the banned liberation movements in the late 1980's, took the initiative to stimulate debate on democratization and economic growth, confronted violence and helped launch the peace process, facilitated an inclusive democratic election, supported the electoral process, and acted as secretariat to the constitutional negotiation process.

### *A Focus on Peace*

During the violent 1980s, a handful of executives initiated dialogue with South African liberation movement leaders who were, at the time, still "banned". These relationships took on added importance during the early years after the ANC and other organizations were unbanned. This was a particularly violent period, leading, eventually to the recognition by nearly all the actors in the conflict of the need for a national peace conference. But the power dynamics between the National Party government and ANC threatened to derail such a peace process. When the government did convene a national peace conference and invited all political leaders to participate, the ANC and its partners opposed the plan, on the grounds that the government was an integral part of violence.

That is when CBM and the South African Council of Churches stepped into the breach, facilitating a process that would lead to an inclusive peace conference. Discussions were held at the headquarters of Barlow Rand Ltd, one of the largest industrial conglomerates in the country, and were co-chaired by John Hall, chairman of the Chamber of Commerce, and Archbishop

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Desmond Tutu. This was the start of a long process during which business leaders played an active (but by no means exclusive) part in working with political parties, women's groups, religious groupings, NGOs, labor unions etc.

In September 1991, the principal peace conference participants signed a National Peace Accord. The peace process eventually involved hundreds of local peace committees across the country. Most of these structures involved local business players to some extent. The accord was based on three inter-related elements:

. *The National Peace Committee* was set up to monitor the implementation of the accord and compliance by political organizations and parties with the accord's code of conduct. The committee was charged with the responsibility of resolving disputes concerning compliance with the terms of the accord.

. *The National Peace Secretariat* was established to coordinate regional and local dispute resolution committees. The peace committees were representative of local communities they served. Representatives of political parties, churches, trade unions, industry and commerce, as well as local and tribal authorities, served on the committees. Importantly, representatives of the police and defense force also served on the local committees.

The peace structures developed a distinctive blue badge with a white dove, which came to symbolize the entire peace movement. Thousands of ordinary citizens from all walks of life participated in local peace structures as peace monitors. In many cases these structures were better able than were security forces to maintain law and order and prevent violence. To a large extent, this was the result of the broad legitimacy and inclusive nature of the peace structures, at

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a time when the power and composition of the security forces were still being contested at political levels.

. *The Commission of Enquiry* was established as a high level, judicial instrument to inquire into the phenomenon of public violence, as well as the specific nature and causes of violence. It was chaired by Judge Richard Goldstone and became a very effective instrument for investigating the involvement of state agencies, security forces and the military wings of political organizations.

***From Peace to Constitution Making***

During the much acclaimed process of developing a new, inclusive and democratic South African constitution, the nation's private sector played an important role that was not widely reported outside of South Africa. CBM's involvement at earlier stages in the peace process had given this business-based organization credibility across the political spectrum, and progressive business leaders within CBM had been working together to transform the country's political economy. CBM was asked to use its consultative network and credibility to facilitate multilateral national forums where development actors could meet and discuss the nation's future. This included high profile national events such as a National Development Workshop, the National Housing Forum and the National Land Workshop. At the local level, the private sector actively participated and facilitated education and community development trusts, hostel initiatives, peace forums, electrification initiatives, training projects, and rural development initiatives.

Following the signing of the National Peace Accord, with the endorsement of both the NP and ANC, CBM was asked to manage administrative and organizational facets of the multi-party

constitutional negotiations. As a credible, professional, non-partisan organization, CBM had the credibility to take on these responsibilities, in effect de-politicizing the management of discussions that were bound to be politically charged in so many other ways. The CBM thus provided process and facilitation support to the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (Codesa). In mid-1992, during the second round of these negotiations, Codesa 2, political violence led to a deadlock between the major political parties. CBM leadership was instrumental in maintaining contact with all political parties, and facilitated debate at a time when the major political forces had broken off nearly all contacts with each other.

Eventually, the ANC and NP government signed a Record of Understanding and a new negotiation process started in March 1993, known as the Multi-Party Negotiation Process. This time CBM was asked to assume full administrative responsibility for the process. It also convened an international and local expert group on regionalism for a three-week workshop process. This resulted in a report, *Constitutional Options and Their Implications for Good Governance and a Sound Economy*, which played a major role in guiding discussions and reaching consensus on language in the Interim Constitution addressing power structures at the regional level.

**Business in the New South Africa**

Following the country's first democratic election in 1994, after consultations with business, government, community, and labor leaders, and with the encouragement of President Nelson Mandela, CBM was merged into a new organization, the National Business Initiative, which also absorbed the Urban Foundation. The NBI was viewed as a way to involve business in the

government's Reconstruction and Development Program. The initial focus was on the role of business in growth, development and democracy, with attention directed, for instance, towards economic growth and development including housing, tourism, and small, micro and medium enterprises development, education and training, effective governance (including assistance with the local government elections) and building relations between business and the new South African government.

***Focus on Sustainable Development***

Today, the NBI is a voluntary coalition of 150 leading South African corporations, focused on building prosperity. Major corporations such as Anglo American, Standard Bank and South African Breweries all play leadership roles in helping to rebuild South Africa's economy and society. The NBI vision is of South Africa as a stable democracy in which a market economy functions for the benefit of all. The organization aims to enhance the private sector's contribution to sustainable growth and development in South Africa. A primary objective is to mobilize business leadership and resources in promoting sustainable development. The NBI believes sustainable development in South Africa is built on the key pillars of economic growth, social development, ecological balance, and democratic consolidation.

To give an idea of its activities, here are some recent NBI contributions. The organization supported more than 6,000 schools and more than one million learners through its Educational Quality Improvement Partnerships Program, and its school based Travel and Tourism program. The EnterPrize entrepreneurship support program has supported the direct creation of more than

1,000 job opportunities and reached more than 2,500 aspirant entrepreneurs through formal training and mentoring programs. The Public Private Partnerships capacity building program has reached more than 1,000 municipal councilors and officials as well as over 200 national and provincial officials. The Nkwe micro finance initiative has shown that it is possible to develop relevant responses to the challenging conditions in this sector. The Colleges Collaboration Fund finally played a critical role in restructuring the Further Education and Training college landscape.

**Conclusion**

In view of the success of the "new" South Africa, it can be safely claimed that the interventions and activities of CBM provide clear evidence that business not only can make important contributions to peacebuilding, but that in spite of the apparent risks, business can itself be an important beneficiary of such interventions. Helping to stabilize unstable communities is, of course, of vital importance in the short term, but it's important to keep in mind that long-term peace is more than the absence of conflict. The private sector needs, therefore, to consider the longer-term development parameters and to engage, as has occurred in South Africa, with stakeholders to determine how large and small corporations can most effectively contribute on an ongoing basis to development, prosperity, and security.

Among the areas where business can have a positive impact on sustainable development are education, community development, environmental protection, energy efficiency, and capacity building. However, it is important to ensure that as business takes on added responsibilities in the

social arena, it does not lose sight of primary functions in society, namely producing goods and services, providing employment, and developing human resources.

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## 13.2 A Profitable Peace: Confederation of British Industry in Northern Ireland

The sectarian conflict that ravaged Northern Ireland for three decades, stifled its economic growth. When peace efforts gathered pace in the 1990's, the picture changed – offering vindication for business leaders who stressed the link between political instability and economic stagnation.

Summers in Northern Ireland are normally associated with marches and parades, which turn into flashpoints for sectarian violence. When the 'marching season' of 2003 (and later also 2004) passed without major incident, the sense of relief was palpable. The Northern Ireland branch of the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) was among those welcoming the development. It noted, in a background paper, that elimination of sectarianism was key to achieving a more favourable environment for doing business in Northern Ireland:

"The events which took place every summer since 1996 – although largely absent in 2003 – in relation to parades and marches, have been extremely damaging to many aspects of the local economy, including an increase in sectarianism and community polarisation, delaying the transition to a stable society which the community wishes to see, and which is essential if Northern Ireland is to achieve the competitiveness essential for success in the global economy."

These words had a familiar ring - echoing the tone of language used by business leaders in the territory from the moment of their initial involvement in efforts to end the sectarian conflict. In

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*Peace – A Challenging New Era,* a landmark document published in 1994 that became widely known as *The Peace Dividend Paper,* the CBI Northern Ireland argued that loss of life, property destruction and high security costs, were directly related to lack of investment and economic decay.

**Peace Dividend**

The CBI, which has 250,000 members across the United Kingdom, was generally seen as a non-political private sector actor in Northern Ireland. It played the double role of think-tank and political lobbying group building bridges of understanding between rival groups. *The Peace Dividend Paper* became a reference point for the peace process. It thrust a business perspective onto the agenda, articulating the case that an end to violence would burnish the image of the territory and make it more attractive to investors. The document suggested that savings from security costs be re-invested in education and infrastructure to further boost the economy. The choice, starkly placed, was this: Northern Ireland could have "peace, progress and prosperity" or remain an irredeemable trouble spot.

The media and politicians soon picked up the term 'peace dividend' and it became a reference to the business point of view on peace, with that it gave new momentum to the peace process. More so, with the ceasefire later that year and the following economic improvements, the rationale of the CBI gained practical legitimacy. Within a year, tourism arrivals increased by 20 per cent. Unemployment fell to the lowest level in fourteen years. Thirty million pounds sterling in new investment ventures flowed in.

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In 1996 CBI joined with other trade and business organisations in an association called the G7. As they stood for the collective voice of many Northern Irish economic interests, they gained considerable authority. Among other things, they organised several meetings in Belfast, inviting all nine political parties to these. It further played an important role on occasions in mediation and media awareness campaigning. In June 1998 CBI assisted in arranging the visit to Northern Ireland of a delegation of business leaders led by US Secretary of Commerce William Daley. The visit symbolised the support for the peace process by facilitating business relations between Northern Ireland and the rest of the world.

In the same year, the CBI, under the auspices of the Community Relations Council, joined with other business organisations to publish a set of anti-sectarian guidelines for employers and management. Instead of emphasising the complications, they stressed the positive outcomes of diversity.

Then the Good Friday Agreement was signed by unionist and nationalist political parties. This landmark accord was seen as providing a framework for future stability – and almost certainly help to sustain the economic improvement that continued throughout the 1990s.

During "the Troubles", Northern Ireland had the worst rate of unemployment in the United Kingdom. In 1986, more than 123,000 people - a record 17.2 percent – were out of work. By 2001, as a fragile peace took hold, this level fell dramatically, to 6.2 percent, and stood at 5.2 percent in early 2004.

The decline in unemployment was coupled with other signs of economic growth. During the 1990's, Northern Ireland had one of the best economic performances of any region in the UK. Official figures showed a rise in inward investment, particularly in the IT and service sectors.

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These investments originated from both the UK and North America. They benefited call centres, the financial services sector and engineering firms. In surveys carried out by the CBI, business confidence was at a high.

The picture was not all rosy. For example, although factory output rose by almost three percent in 2003 – in contrast to the rest of the UK, where it was virtually static - traditional big employers in the region's food and textiles industries struggled to compete in international markets.

**At Risk**

Nonetheless, the improvement in the overall economic picture was clear. Of overriding concern now is whether this peace – however fragile - is durable. Lurking in the back of everyone's mind is the danger of renewed conflict, which means more political uncertainty, and reduced investment flows.

As Geoff McEnroe, director of the IBEC/CBI Joint Business Council, which was set up to run a North/South trade and business development programme, noted:

"Political uncertainty makes inward investors think twice. They either take Northern Ireland out of their thinking frame or delay investment; or their shareholders say: why should you invest in a country where there is not the stability you would expect?"

Also at risk was the money pumped into Northern Ireland by the European Union to support groups and organisations involved in peace and reconciliation. With the expansion of the EU, these amounts could be substantially reduced or dry up, as priorities change in Brussels.

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Democratic Dialogue, a think-tank based in Belfast, said continued EU funding was critical for Northern Ireland to become "a normal civil society, enjoying economic prosperity, social inclusion and – above all – political stability, including in its relationship with the rest of the island.

"The always over-committed nature of public-expenditure planning, not to mention the expectation that Northern Ireland can expect a colder public spending climate in the years to come, means support from EU structural funds is of critical value to the necessary policy of innovation and learning."

Nigel Smyth, director of CBI Northern Ireland said, "The big issue is uncertainty in terms of the political situation." He said the institutions set up under the Good Friday Agreement were working and were in the best interest of business and the community as a whole. "Our real issue is an image problem. There isn't sufficient appreciation of the peace dividend."

**Recent Developments**

In recent years, the CBI itself has not undertaken any new initiatives on the peace and reconciliation front. The emphasis of civil society has shifted – towards efforts to ensure peace endures. Under the peace accords, new democratic political structures were erected, and a peace and reconciliation infrastructure was put in place as well. Many of the bodies established for this purpose – such as the Human Rights Commission, the Equality Commission, and a Civic Forum – have membership from a wide cross-section of the community.

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These institutions have as their primary aim the building of bridges of understanding across sectarian fault lines. The Civic Forum, for example, a body set up under the Belfast Agreement, maintains contact between civil society and politicians. Counteract, established by the umbrella Irish Congress of Trade Unions, helps eliminate sectarian harassment within the workplace and community. It has set as its task ensuring no one suffers unfair treatment because of religious belief or political opinion. The Community Relations Council uses funds from the European Community and the government to help community projects that involve bringing people from different traditions to develop relationships of trust and understanding - and the confidence to address issues of difference between them.

In the background paper issued after the 2003 marching season, the CBI stressed the role of business in finding solutions to the problems of improving community relations and promoting social inclusion. One of the points it made would seem self-evident elsewhere; in the context of Northern Ireland's "Troubles", it had a special resonance – and made a clear case for the peace dividend. This was that employers in the region were interested in attracting the widest range of people with the best abilities to work in their businesses. "An increasing number of employers are also recognising the business benefits of having a diverse workforce."

Given the depth of animosity that has always existed between the different factions, it is unlikely that political tension will completely disappear in the short term. There is, though, general consensus that even a fragile peace is better than open conflict - and more likely to foster economic prosperity.

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**<Box>**

**The Business of Peace**

What is the role of private business in an area of violent conflict? Jane Nelson, author of *The Business of Peace*, argues that because most businesses do not benefit from conflict, they should get involved in prevention.

"Conflict is almost always an impediment rather than a spur to private sector investment and economic growth. With the exception of the 3-4 percent of world trade generated by the arms industry, certain illegal commercial activities, and situations where business gains directly from being part of war economies, few industries benefit from violent conflict."

In fact, notes Nelson, conflict disrupts business, interferes with normal business affairs and inhibits open and free markets.

Her book – published in 2000 by the Prince of Wales Business Leaders Forum in London - presents a business case for engagement in conflict prevention. It analyzes the cost and benefit factors involved, and makes a case for private corporate engagement in prevention of violent societal conflict.

More than 70 of the 190 independent states in the world are classified as being of medium or high security risk for businesses operating internationally. The changing nature of conflict, and rapid globalization of the world economy in the last decade, have combined to make the private sector an important actor in many societies affected by conflict. Nelson, and others, argue, that

by working with other sectors, business can make an important contribution to structural stability. This means going beyond risk assessment and reputation management.

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**Resources**

*Northern Ireland's economic fears.* Online: http://news.bbc.co. uk/1/hi/business/1402261.stm

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## 13.3 Planting Peace: Philippine Business for Social Progress

***Enlightened self-interest of business and the human quest for peace and stability can go hand in hand, a concrete example from the Philippine island of Mindanao has shown. A local businessman convinced foreign investors to inject capital into a new banana producing company, which has lured young men out of the ranks of a rebel group.*** By Ruth G. Honculada*

Upon seeing the bustling lively town of Paglas in Maguindanao, located in the southern region of Mindanao, Philippines, it is hard to imagine that this peaceful community of Christian, Muslim and Lumad (an indigenous people in the region), was once a virtual "no-man's land". Strife with bitter inter-ethnic differences, high crime rate and extreme poverty, it had to take a maverick leader like Datu Paglas, president and CEO of Paglas Corporation to show the way towards building lasting peace. Because of his inspiring journey, more companies are now realizing that the business of peace pays good dividends.

Datu Paglas, who originates from an old and respected Mindanao family, managed to establish a banana plantation, the first of its scale on the poverty-stricken island. In the years since its inception in 1998, the plantation has changed the lives of many people. It created jobs. It also generated additional economic activities. One of the major characteristics of the new banana business is that it has helped to reduce the gap between Christians and Muslims, the two groups that for decades have been seen as rivals, creating animosity that has been perceived to be one of the factors behind the armed conflict on Mindanao.

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Datu Paglas' initiative triggered the interest of the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP), a foundation set up in the early 1970s by Philippine corporations to help poor communities to help themselves. PBSP grew out to become the country's largest business-led foundation supporting social development. Its role is unique in Asia. The apparent success of Datu Paglas's company to overcome differences between Christians and Muslims, and to reduce poverty in Mindanao, reportedly was one of the reasons why PBSP judged the time was ripe to enter the region with programs aimed at promoting peace through business. In 2001, PBSP started the Business and Peace Program, in partnership with the London-based NGO Prince of Wales International Business Leaders Forum, International Alert, the British embassy in Manila and the British Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines. Through this Business and Peace Program, PBSP enables member companies to develop a business sector response to the problems related to peace and development in Mindanao. The approach of the program is to encourage local companies to adopt internal management policies that promote peace and stability. Datu Paglas has become one of the major representatives of the PBSP program and Paglas Corporation, a second company he established in addition to the banana plantation, joined the organization in 2002.

**<Box>**

**A hotbed for rebel recruitment**

Like many of its neighboring towns, Paglas was once a hotbed of recruitment of rebels. Many, usually unemployed young men were drawn into the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). To understand the story of this town, one must see it in the context of the Mindanao conflict in the

southern part of the Philippines. Since Spanish and American domination, the Philippines had evolved into a predominantly Catholic country, which has its center of gravity in the north and center. The political and economic strongholds over the past century were traditionally centered in Luzon, the northern region where the capital of Manila is located, and Visayas, the predominantly Christian central region of the country. Mindanao, the huge island in the south, inhabited by Muslims and the indigenous Lumad, is considered to be a neglected area.

Muslim rebels took up arms against the central government thirty years ago. Most rebels operated as MILF-fighters. Some analysts attribute the conflict in Mindanao to the non-integration of Muslims and the Lumads into the national mainstream because of Christian prejudices against Muslims, the government's neglect for their welfare and the Muslim's firm insistence on self-rule. Others trace it to deep-rooted injustice, as indigenous people over the years found their ancestral land taken over by immigrants.

Fighting between government troops and the MILF, as well as the Abu Sayyaf, a breakaway group of the MILF, escalated in recent years. The government's all out war against the MILF in the late 1990's, which flared up after a failed peace agreement and a hostage crises that ended in a bloody rescue attempt by the government, slowed the momentum for peace efforts. Beyond the conflict lies a deeper problem of lack of socio-economic development in the Muslim dominated provinces. Mindanao has the highest poverty incidence of the Philippines, while the region where Datu Paglas' company is located, is even poorer. The poverty incidence of this autonomous region was 62.9 percent, meaning that more than half of its population was living below the poverty line.

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The irony is that, although Mindanao is considered to be a neglected area, harassed by conflict, the island is rich in resources and possesses incomparable natural wealth. Its rich soil makes it the leading producer of agricultural crops in the country. The region leads in the production of fruits and vegetables and is a major producer of livestock. Its rich fishing grounds contributed 42 percent of the country's fish produce in 1998. It has an extensive sea and river system but its potential for maritime transport has yet to be tapped. Mindanao also boasts rich mineral deposits and metallic reserves. Its proximity to the neighboring Asian countries and Australia gives it a comparative advantage for trade.

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**Maverick Leadership**

Datu Ibrahim Pendatun Paglas III, was in second grade of elementary school when he realized for the first time that, in his perception, something was wrong with the way people lived in his hometown in Maguindanao. Coming from a dominant political and economic clan, he saw that while he and other families were living well, other members of the community remained poor. "I did not see any economic development in Muslim areas, where only the leaders seemed to have a good life. I was not comfortable with it," Datu Paglas said, reflecting on the awakening of his social conscience. Thus, when he turned 28 and became the mayor of Paglas town (the town was named after his grandfather), he decided to do something to change the situation. He chose the way of peace.

Datu Paglas' goal was to demonstrate how investments could facilitate peace and development in areas of conflict. His approach departed from the traditional way of thinking, according to which

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development can only be achieved if there is peace. On the contrary, he says, "It is the other way around. The logic behind it is simple. A person who has nothing to lose is not afraid to die but he who has a lot in life cannot afford to waste life nor take another's person's life".

Datu Paglas knew that he could use his influence for the good of the community. His family ties to many of the MILF commanders meant that he was able to appeal directly to the leadership of the rebel group. By the mid-1990's, the peace and order situation had significantly improved. After committing a substantial amount of his family's land to the new project he had in mind, he convinced a group of neighboring landowners to do the same. His plan was to set up a banana plantation. After succeeding to obtain a total of 1,300 hectares, Datu Paglas actively began to seek investments. Courting several foreign investors who already had vested interests in various Mindanao plantations, he persuaded them to expand their businesses in Paglas town.

Given the town's reputation of strife and conflict, many were hesitant. Still considering the dynamism of the leadership, vast track of fertile land, limitless supplies of fresh water and the ready supply of local labor, investors believed they should give it a try.

**An Economic Issue**

The initiative led to one of the biggest investments ever made in the economy of Mindanao. Two companies were involved in this project. One was the banana plantation proper, called La Frutera Inc., managed by an investment group in Manila, and established with overseas investment from Italy, Saudi Arabia and the United States, including the Chiquita banana brand. La Frutera's initial investment amounted to $26 million. Datu Paglas then set up Paglas Corporation, the second company, which would provide labor, security and transport services to the plantation.

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The late MILF-chairman Hashim Salamat was also said to have been instrumental in securing the peace and maintaining it. Understanding that the road to peace and prosperity was largely an economic issue, he had given his personal assurance that MILF soldiers would not enter Paglas town, and that no personnel, equipment or transport vehicle of La Frutera or Paglas Corporation would be compromised. Investors stress that no protection money has ever been paid, and absolutely no donations have been made by either company to the MILF, nor have there been solicitations made by the MILF itself.

Today, the plantation boasts of its state-of the art irrigation technology provided by an Israeli engineering firm. In six years time, production grew to close to ten million tons of Cavendish bananas. The bananas are being exported to Japan, China, Korea and the Middle East.

Paglas town also started to reap the benefits of the investment. The banana industry infuses at least 400,000 dollars to the local economy of Paglas town every month in the form of payroll and payment to local service contractors. An additional 2,300 hectares of land has been allocated to banana production, enabling the banana plantation to expand, which had already led to 3,000 employees from Paglas town and its outskirts being hired. Datu Paglas persuaded his investors to infuse an additional 50 million dollars into the economy of Muslim Mindanao to back the expansion. In addition, Datu Paglas' himself established yet another company, the Paglas Rural Bank. It has 3,000 local customers, many of whom never held a bank account before, and supports more than fifty small business enterprises in the region.

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**Significant Achievement**

Beyond the economic benefits lies a major achievement. Now, Christians, Muslims and Lumads work and live together in peace. Initially, Christian plantation workers were brought in as trainers and supervisors. Datu Paglas gave his personal assurance that they would be under his personal protection. Christians are no longer viewed as superior or any better than Muslim employees. The company on a regular basis organizes workshops to increase mutual understanding and tolerance. Religious leaders from both sides gave seminars on Islam and Christianity. Christian workers avoid eating pork at lunchtime in front of their Muslim colleagues. Children, regardless of religion, attend a local school together, increasing the elementary school enrollment rate from 50 percent to 70 percent. Referring to the apparent successful cohabitation of Cristians and Muslims, Datu Paglas says,

*"We all worship the same God, we just call him by different names".*

A man nicknamed "Spider", an ex-MILF company commander, is now the most senior plantation supervisor. Now that his children are in school and are able to eat regular meals, he says he no longer considers rejoining the MILF:

*"When a man is hungry, he does not fear to kill and he does not fear to die."*

Spider said he now values greatly the opportunity to live a peaceful and productive life.

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There are numerous ex-MILF combatants who have chosen to work in peace in the banana plantations. But when the renewed conflict between MILF and government forces broke out in early 2000, many of them offered to go back and resume their posts. The late MILF-chairman Hashim Salamat issued an official statement however that all plantation workers were to remain on their jobs. He is quoted as saying,

*"We will not have peace without development. The success of this plantation is critical to the peaceful future of Muslim Mindanao".*

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**Uniting business for peace**

Philippine Business for Social Progress is a private and non-profit foundation dedicated to promoting corporate social responsibility. It was organized in December 1970 by fifty of the country's prominent business leaders, and has since grown to become the nation's largest and most influential business-led social development foundation. From its initial membership, it has grown to more than 180 members, worked with some 2,500 partner organizations, provided financial assistance which supported over 5,000 projects, and benefited close to 2.5 million poor households.

PBSP has also conducted and supported research into the relationship between businesses and peace in Mindanao, including identifying best practices among companies. In recognition of the need to address socio-economic disparities and underdevelopment in Mindanao, the PBSP Center for Corporate Citizenship launched a Business and Peace program in October 2001.

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Scheduled initially to run for three years, the Business and Peace program enables member companies to encourage local companies to adopt internal management policies that promote peace and diversity.

Among the Business and Peace program components are an internship program, called YupPeace (Young Muslim Professionals for Business and Peace), which provides internship opportunities for young Muslim professionals to gain practical working experience in Manila-based companies. The concept is to break the barriers of cultural animosity and enhance skills. Another component of the program consists of efforts to facilitate discussion on diversity in the workplace. Focus group discussions are being organized at Mindanao-based companies to address the issue of Muslims and Christians working together in business. Yet another part of the project is Business Links, which seeks to incite large companies to help smaller corporations by doing business with them. As a result of this initiative, more and more Philippine businesses are considering to use business partners in Mindanao as suppliers of raw materials. The BJ Coco Oil Mill, for instance, recently entered a relationship with a Mindanao agricultural company, resulting in the planting of 300 hectares of cassava, benefiting 600 families. The Mindanao Business and Peace program also provides business training to small and medium-sized Muslim companies. Recently, PBSP has joined a consortium of civil society organizations that aims to address the various societal divides in the three island provinces of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. Under the Business and Peace Program, PBSP anchors the business sector interventions such as workshops and trainings for local businessmen in these areas.

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**Source**

www.international-alert.org/policy/business/projects/asia_philippines (International Alert's Business and Conflict programme: Breaking the links between economics and conflict in Mindanao)

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# 14. Diaspora: Untapped Potential for Peacebuilding in the Homelands

Abdullah A. Mohamoud*

***The debate on the role of exile communities often focuses disproportionately on potential threats and negative aspects. However, diasporas can – and do - make significant contributions to peacebuilding, conflict transformation and post-conflict reconstruction activities in their home countries. To maximize this immense potential it should be tapped in a more creative and effective manner.***

The current globalization process has facilitated the long-distance involvement of the diaspora in events in their respective homelands. Thanks to inexpensive transportation and rapid communication, diaspora are exerting an increasing influence on their homeland politics. This advantage enables diaspora communities to build up vast transnational networks, criss-crossing countries and continents, linking the process of globalization to local conditions of their respective countries of origin. Likewise it enables the individuals and groups in the diaspora communities to build up intersecting social, economic and political bridges that link their new places of residence with their original homelands. In this regard, the contemporary diaspora manifests itself in different ways as being one of the main global forces shaping the directions and trends of the 21st century.

## Debates

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The existing literature on diaspora focuses disproportionately on potential threats from the diaspora, which overshadow their positive activities. The main focus is on the political role that diaspora play with regard to homeland conflicts. This proposition generally links the activities of the diaspora with security issues and then concentrates more on global rather than homeland security concerns. Furthermore, most of the available studies concentrate on the activities of the militant and hard-line groups in the diaspora. The examples most frequently cited are those informed by the militant activities of the Irish, Sri Lankan Tamils, Sikhs and Kurdish diasporas. Yet the hard-line groups within the diaspora, although their activities are often visible, are neither the majority nor do they represent the whole diaspora of any given country. There are many diaspora groupings with different political and social-economic aspirations, and as such the diaspora should be carefully disaggregated. There is no denying that some diaspora groupings sponsor subversive activities in their respective countries of origin. However, adopting creative policy strategies that turn the destructive activities of the diaspora into constructive gains for the people in the homeland can reverse this negative tendency.

This chapter attempts to add value to the current debate on the diaspora and dynamics of conflict in the homeland from a significant and yet a neglected perspective. It concentrates on the critical role that diaspora groupings can, and have, played in promoting peace in their homelands. More specifically it shows how the involvement of diasporas in the domestic dynamics of their homeland often contributes to fostering conflict transformation, post-conflict reconstruction and socio-economic development, in their respective countries of origin.

The central argument of this chapter is that diasporas frequently contribute to the peace process in their homeland through political, civil societal and developmental means. Furthermore,

diaspora because of their strategic position have access to financial resources and transnational networks at different levels which, if properly tapped, can make a difference to the situation in their homeland. This strategic potential can be much more fruitfully harnessed when this capacity is better integrated into the foreign and development policy initiatives undertaken in the host countries. This is with the aim of making better use of the immense potential of the diaspora for conflict transformation initiatives and development activities in their countries of origin.

**Positive Political Involvement**

In contrast to the dominant perception, the 'meddling' of the diaspora in the politics of their home countries is not always negative. The simple fact that the diasporas are not a monolithic entity means that diverse political views and strategies of engagement are brought to the politics of their homelands. There are therefore cases where the active involvement of the diaspora in the struggles in their homelands has resulted in positive changes in the domestic situations.

This involvement takes different forms. One is the tangible support that diaspora provide to the constructive forces on the ground struggling to restore order and political stability in the homeland. Diasporas provide support to local actors in different ways. For example they might sponsor media projects that can be used to educate and raise awareness of the people about the need for peaceful co-existence and social harmony and the promotion of a culture of peace and tolerance. Diaspora frequently use the media as a powerful tool in peacebuilding and democratic development in the homeland.

An example of this is the Nuba Mountains radio station in Sudan, sponsored by the Sudanese diaspora, which is now playing an important role in informing the community about the

prospects for peace and mobilizing them for the challenges that need to be addressed in post-conflict Sudan. Furthermore, the diaspora channel financial resources and innovative thinking into activities geared to enhancing and upgrading the capacities of sub-national and local institutions and organizations at various levels. These include the provision of training to local peace-brokers, organizing seminars, workshops and public debates, etc, where information, skills, experience and new ideas are exchanged and shared. A good example is provided by the activities of the Afghan diaspora living in North America and Europe but currently working in Afghanistan.

Diaspora supports the peace forces in the homeland by providing information, new innovative ideas and creative practices of peacemaking strategies. A significant communication tool for disseminating this valuable information is the emergence of online forums that are able to link various peace forces both in the homeland and in the diaspora into organized discussion and action groups. Diaspora helps peace activists at home to make contact with important and powerful networks abroad. These contacts boost the moral and political clout of the positive forces on the ground. It is in this way that diasporas contribute to international efforts which impact positively on their respective homelands in terms of peacebuilding and conflict transformation.

Diaspora can contribute positively to peace initiatives in the homeland through their lobbying activities in the international media, international organizations and in the host countries where they reside. Diaspora initiate these advocacy activities to galvanize support, persuade and also pressurize the international community to take punitive measures against rebel groups, factional leaders and governments in their respective homelands which they regard as oppressive,

undemocratic and dictatorial. In this respect, diasporas serve as positive bridge-builders to the international political actors and organizations supporting the peace and democratization process in their homelands. It is in this endeavor that some individuals and groups within the diaspora act as pro-active peace ambassadors for the homeland they have left behind physically but have not abandoned emotionally. Good examples are the Afghan diaspora in North America and Europe and the Congolese diaspora in France, Belgium and the Netherlands, who act as pressure groups and are now undertaking transnational advocacy activities through expert meetings, seminars and workshops aimed at influencing policy matters at the EU level. According to Yesu Kitenga of the Congolese Lisanga organization in the Netherlands,

"*our main task is to provide reliable information from the homeland, to raise awareness among the concerned organizations and government decision-makers about certain politically motivated persecutions and human rights violations of which often little is known outside a country, but also guide the policymakers towards adopting the right policy approach towards our homeland"1.*

The diaspora can contribute positively to the peace dialogue by making their expertise available to the conflicting parties in the homeland in order to help them settle their differences through negotiation. The diaspora has on many occasions shown that it has the expertise to help enhance the articulation and negotiating capacities of the local protagonists. More concretely, the diaspora can undertake to draft negotiation strategies which can sometimes serve as basis for dialogue between the conflicting factions in the homeland. Furthermore, during the post-conflict

reconstruction period, the diaspora due to their generally advanced educational levels, can assist the new governments in drafting treaties, agreements and constitutions, identifying policy priorities for social, economic and political reconstruction, and formulating strategies for implementation. They can also provide advice to the governments in the homeland on diverse policy issues ranging from rebuilding justice systems to disarming the armed militias. It is in this way that the diaspora contributes to rehabilitation of political institutions and civil administrations badly weakened or devastated by conflict. In fact the highly visible and increasing involvement of diasporas in the conflict transformation efforts, and in the post-conflict reconstruction and socio-economic development, of their homelands is a new phenomenon which crystallizes the emerging forms of local and global connections and networks in many parts of the world today.2 Concrete examples include the Afghan diaspora's contribution to the peace settlement in the Petersberg reconciliation talks in post-war Afghanistan in 2002; the Sri Lankan diaspora's contribution to the peace negotiations in 2002/2003; and that of the Somali diaspora in the Nairobi peace talks between the political factions in 2003/2004. It is interesting to note here that all these examples challenge the often cited argument advanced by Paul Collier that the activities of diasporas in their homelands tend to exacerbate conflict rather than contribute to constructive conflict transformation.3

**<Box>**

**Afghan diaspora**

Afghan's diaspora groups have played a significant political role in ensuring that a peaceful power transition took place in Afghanistan in the aftermath of the US led, NATO military

intervention in 2001/2002. Diaspora members played a crucial role during the Petersburg peace dialogue and the formation of the post-conflict government in Afghanistan at a major conference in Bonn. Influential political figures among the diaspora were directly involved in the talks on the transitional government in Bonn. Examples include the Rome-based delegation of former king Zaher Shah, and the Cyprus-based intellectuals who had been discussing and pondering policy options and strategies for resolving the political crisis in Afghanistan for some years. During the reconciliation talks members of the Afghan diaspora have played bridge-building roles as strategic agents to the international actors and organizations facilitating the peace process. Moreover, certain Afghan diaspora groups contributed to the peace dialogue by making their expertise available to the conflicting political factions and groupings in Afghanistan to help them settle their differences by diplomatic means. Their expertise helped enhance the articulation and negotiating capacities of the local political factions. More concretely, they undertook to draft negotiation strategies which served as basis for dialogue between the conflicting factions in Afghanistan. Others gave up well-paid careers in the West and returned home in order to support the consolidation for the peacebuilding process and sound governance in Afghanistan.

Source: M. Ashraf Haidari, “Rebuilding Afghanistan: The Diaspora Role”, The Asian Magazine, Oct. 10, 2004.

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**Civic-Oriented Involvement**

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Diaspora involvement in the social and political dynamics in the homeland is not always along political lines. There are diaspora groupings that choose to be neutral on political issues with regard to homeland conflicts and who opt instead to play active roles in domestic development through civil society. Often this is because these diaspora groupings see themselves as natural allies of the civil society rather than the political society in the homeland. As such these diasporas help widen the civil society peace constituency in the homeland. The impact of this form of diaspora involvement in domestic development can be better observed at sub-national, local and village rather than national levels. These diaspora groupings hold the view that viable peace in the homeland must be not only from the top-down, but also from the bottom up, in a spirit of diligence and complementarity. They therefore argue that peacebuilding can only be effective if the national, sub-national and local processes and initiatives are consciously linked between different strategic sites and actors. It is from this optic that these diaspora groupings support local human rights organizations, women's associations and sponsor civic-oriented programs. For example, they channel more resources and innovative thinking into activities geared to enhancing and upgrading the capacities of sub-national and local institutions and organizations at various levels, such as providing training to the local peace brokers, organizing seminars, workshops and public debates, etc, where information, skills, experience and new ideas are exchanged and shared. They also channel more funding and expertise to democratization projects that are geared to promote social emancipation, empowerment, political participation and good governance in the country at different social levels. Furthermore, they sponsor new development projects (which are sometimes set up in collaboration with local activists) that are geared to capacity enhancement and genuine social emancipation.

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The reasoning being that empowered and emancipated people are best positioned to use their maximum potential for self-development and to make a break with the past and take their destiny into their own hands. Many diasporas identify these socially-oriented projects as priorities in building peace constituencies and good governance culture in their countries of origin. They therefore urge and persuade the mainstream donor development organizations in the host countries to orient their development assistance in the homelands towards these efforts. In this respect, diasporas set the agenda for an alternative approach to post-conflict democratic development in the homeland. In fact, this new alternative approach is very much needed since good governance can only take root in the homelands if it is anchored in solid sub-national and local social institutions.

On top of all this, diasporas, because of their position, can play bridge-building roles by helping local organizations and civic associations, such as human rights activists, journalists and others, to connect with organizations and institutions in the host countries. This activity helps local civic associations and peace activists gain access to influential and powerful civil society networks abroad that it would otherwise have been difficult to access. Furthermore, being a part of global networks enhances the profile of local peace groups and organizations and also helps them to gain access to information, resources and external partners which could boost their position in the domestic power relations.

Another aspect to have received little publicity is the innovative manner in which some diaspora groupings and organizations are addressing the conflict back home. They are attempting to foster the peace process in the homeland by mobilizing and promoting alternative and genuine non-political peace makers from the civil society both in the homeland and among the diaspora.

These "alternative" peacemakers include public personalities such as poets, writers, musicians, prominent scholars, sports stars such as football players, etc. These notables are selected on the basis that they have a moral authority and command public respect across ethnic, clan and group lines and, above all, cannot be accused of seeking political office. This innovative initiative is commendable and deserves to be more widely popularized.

**Promoting Peace through Development**

Some diasporas hold the view that peace can be effectively promoted in the homeland through development. The logic behind this vision is that in many instances domestic conflicts are caused not only by power struggles at the national level, they are also triggered by unequal distribution of the national resources, extreme social and economic imbalances, marginalization and grinding poverty at different societal levels. These multiple levels of the conflict need to be separately addressed. Diaspora groupings therefore address some of the economic causes of the conflicts and thereby make a positive contribution to the reduction and stabilization of the social tensions of the economically marginalized groups at the bottom of society. Diasporas undertake this effort by setting up community and welfare projects at local levels. Most of the projects sponsored by the diasporas are geared to rehabilitating health centers and facilities, building schools, supporting rural farmers and helping create income-generating activities for the destitute and marginalized groups in society. Diasporas undertake these community projects through individual and collective efforts. For example, in some instances, individuals and groups within a diaspora donate cash, materials and needed equipment to various bodies and institutions in the homeland which help improve community facilities at village and town level. The efforts also

greatly contribute towards poverty alleviation among individuals through job creation, and provide needed services to the communities through the provision of basic public goods and service delivery.

*A good example is the Tamils Rehabilitation Organisation based in the UK. The aims of the organization include the provision of short-term relief and long-term rehabilitation to the displaced and war-affected Tamils; channeling expertise and funds to promote economic development; and raising the living conditions of Tamils displaced by war.*

**Conclusion**

Positive activities of diaspora are having a moderating influence on conflict dynamics in the homeland. For example, "the moderating influence - and decreased financial support - of the Irish diaspora in the United States played a key role in convincing the IRA to accept the Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland in April, 1998" (Newland and Patrick, 2004). There is enough evidence to state that "the positive potentials of diaspora communities for conflict transformation in their home countries outweigh their negative potential to become spoils" (Zunzer, 2004).

The activities of the diaspora should not solely be regarded from the political dimension, as is now generally the case. They should also be seen in terms of the non-political lines in their civil society and development-related dimensions. This perspective enables us to gain a better knowledge of the activities of the positive forces within the diaspora and the less publicized roles they play in fostering the transformation of conflicts in their countries of origin. Diasporas often possess vast transnational networks, huge financial resources and much needed human capital

due to their higher educational levels. All these advantages enable diasporas to make a difference for the better to the situations in their homelands. There is therefore an urgent need to develop better research tools and policy strategies that facilitate the effective harnessing of the vast capacities of the diasporas for the promotion of peace, viable governance and sustainable development in the homeland.

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**Notes**

1 Interview, Amsterdam, August 16, 2004

2 For a good analysis of emerging local-global linkages, see further, Mark Duffield. *Global Governance and the New Wars: The Merging of Development and Security.* London and New York: Zed Books, 2001.

3 See Paul Collier, "Economic Causes of Civil Conflict and their Implications for Policy," Policy Research Working Papers. Washington D.C.: The World Bank, June 2000. Paul Collier was the director of the Development Research group at the World Bank (from April 1998 to April 2003).

Resources

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**Additional websites**

http://www.migrationinformation.org

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## 14.1 Fear and Hope in Acholiland: Kacoke Madit in Uganda

**Since the mid-1980's, the Acholi people of Northern Uganda have borne the brunt of a debilitating war. In their search for peace, Acholis living abroad invoked a Big Meeting tradition. "With external agencies having failed to deliver peace, the onus for a resolution is on Uganda and Ugandans."**

A UN official once described the situation in Northern Uganda as the world's worst humanitarian crisis. The territory of Acholiland sits at the heart of this protracted conflict; the Acholi people are among its main victims. Killings, abductions, rape and torture are commonplace. Schools and health centers have been destroyed. Slicing off victims' body parts is a gruesome trademark of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), the rebel group that has battled the government of President Yoweri Museveni since the mid-1980's. The national army has also been accused of committing atrocities; critics say neither party is serious about peace.

Human rights bodies say the conflict has displaced hundreds of thousands of people, mainly Acholis, a large number of whom are crammed into refugee camps. For Acholis who form a far-flung Diaspora across Europe and North America, the conflict is never far from their thoughts. Since the mid-1990's, they have used a traditional Acholi system of convening big meetings, to get the parties to at least talk to each other.

Their efforts have created an organization called *Kacoke Madit* (Big Meeting or Big Conference in Luo, the language of the Acholi), which has staged a series of conferences to build a

consensus for sustainable peace. These open events, to which all groups with an interest in bringing the conflict to a peaceful end are invited, have proven vital given the absence of any major international effort to secure peace in Northern Uganda.

With a charter providing for participation by all Acholi people, irrespective of views, religious or political belief, in peace initiatives, Kacoke Madit supports an inclusive dialogue process that combines the search for peace with education within affected communities and other practical efforts.

**<Box>**

**A long history of conflicts**

The war in Northern Uganda is related to the rise to power of Yoweri Musevini's National Resistance Movement/National Resistance Army (NRM/A); it is rooted in a long history of conflicts.

After General Idi Amin seized power from Milton Obote in 1971, he ordered soldiers belonging to the Acholi and Langi ethnic groups, the very backbone of the army, to surrender their arms. Many of those who did so were killed. New soldiers were recruited from other regions of the country.

Many Acholi and Langi soldiers went into exile abroad after this, and in April 1979, with help from the Tanzanian army and Yoweri Museveni's Front for National Salvation, they returned and overthrew Amin. Various power shifts followed, caused, in the main, by ideological and ethnic differences, until elections were held in 1980. These polls were won by Milton Obote's Uganda People's Congress, but the outcome was disputed. Eventually, a conflict between Langi

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and Acholi soldiers – that shattered a longstanding military alliance between these two groups – led to Obote's overthrow in July 1985.

This coup brought General Tito Okello to power, and he managed to unite the various rebel groups and political parties under his government while negotiating with one which remained on the outside, the National Resistance Army (NRA) headed by Museveni. NRA eventually seized power, in January 1986.

This was a major blow to the Acholi because for the first time socio-economic, political and military powers were concentrated in the South. Tension between Acholi soldiers in the defeated army, and the NRA escalated after reports that NRA soldiers operating in Northern Uganda committed atrocities including rape and abduction and confiscation of property.

In May 1986, the government ordered all former UNLA soldiers to report to barracks. Many went into hiding. Others fled to Sudan. Some took up arms. Soon, these ex-soldiers were joined by a stream of youths fleeing NRA operations in the North. Various groups of Acholi refugee combatants were subsequently formed, including the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).

The war has lasted for almost two decades partly because it has become an extension of regional and international power struggles. The Sudan government provided sanctuary and military hardware to the LRA because the Ugandan government supported SPLA, one of the Sudanese rebel groups. The conflict is also a source and cover for clandestine income for high-ranking military and government officials and other profiteers.

**<End Box>**

**Kidnapping of Children**

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It was in the districts of Gulu, Kitgum and Pader in Acholiland, that rebels first took up arms in the 1980s, after accusing army elements of carrying out atrocities in the area. The LRA, which eventually emerged as the main rebel force, is led by a self-proclaimed "prophet", Joseph Kony, whose professed aim is to rule Uganda in accordance with the principles of the Biblical Ten Commandments.

For many years, the movement had sanctuary in neighbouring Sudan and carried out cross-border raids. In 2002, the government, through an agreement with Sudan, pursued them across the border. But the operation – called *Iron Fist* – failed, and as the rebels increased attacks inside Uganda, the Uganda People's Defense Forces was unable to provide adequate protection for civilians affected by the backlash.

Some observers believe no military solution is likely and have criticized the Museveni government for its rigid pursuit of a military solution. The government's amnesty offers to the rebels, have largely been ignored.

The human rights picture has largely been defined by the kidnapping of young children during night-time raids in rural villages. Many of these kidnappings occurred as acts of reprisal during Operation Iron Fist. Human rights groups say there have been more than 22,000 abductions, creating an atmosphere of fear. Many are taken to camps in Southern Sudan; children make up 85 percent of the LRA's forces. They are forced to kill their own kin, and are abused both physically and sexually before getting military training and coming into confrontations with government forces that were originally supposed to have protected them from abduction.

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Every evening, large numbers of children who live near urban centers move unaccompanied to seek shelter overnight in churches, hospital compounds and shop verandas. It is estimated that there are up to 20,000 such "night commuters".

Baker Ochola, retired bishop of Kitgum, said the kidnappings were actually destroying Acholi society from the roots.

"A child who is threatened is supposed to run to its mother. But now, children are running away from home to be safe from abduction. This means we are cultivating a new culture. Children no longer have an identity."

The entire civilian population suffers in this conflict: in the two districts where the war is most heavily concentrated, infrastructure has been decimated and no significant economic development is taking place.

**A Big Meeting**

Against this backdrop, Acholis living in North America felt compelled to raise the issue when they attended a convention of the Uganda North America Association in Chicago in 1996. They were rebuffed. Surprised by the lack of interest, they organized a separate meeting in Toronto, Canada, in 1996, agreed a nine-point resolution calling for peace and delivered it to President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda. He did not respond; they pressed ahead anyway.

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The meeting in Canada was followed by a more structured and organised Kacoke Madit in London from April 5-6, 1997. Organised by Acholis in the United Kingdom, this gathering drew more than 300 delegates from Uganda, the USA, Canada, the UK, Sweden, Germany, Denmark and Kenya. It was at this meeting that the organization Kacoke Madit took form.

Organizers were encouraged by the presence of representatives from both the Ugandan government and rebels: the ministers responsible for Foreign Affairs and Northern Uganda were there; LRA sent its secretary for External Affairs and Mobilisation and two members of the military High Command.

This encouraging start was reinforced by the adoption of an 11-point resolution calling on the government, and LRA, to cease hostilities and find ways to peacefully resolve the conflict. Despite the strength of these resolutions, however, and the commitment of everyone attending to implement them, neither the LRA nor the government established a viable negotiating process.

To help push things along, a follow-up meeting was held in London, from July 17-19, 1998 under the theme “Removing the Obstacles to Peace”.

More than 300 delegates came, from all sectors of the Acholi communities, non-Ugandan individuals, representatives of governments, and international non-governmental organizations. They tried to identify obstacles to peace and ways of overcoming them. In the end, a resolution was adopted reaffirming the validity of commitments enunciated at the 1997 Kacoke Madit. The conference also brought victims of the war to make their presentation. One of them was a woman whose lips were cup by the rebels. This brought home the message to those who were still sympathetic to the LRA rebels activities.

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Similar international conferences were held annually until 2000 when the last Kacoke Madit took place in Nairobi, Kenya, with delegates from northern Uganda, the Acholi diaspora, the government of Sudan, the LRA, representatives of the international community and other stakeholders with interest in the conflict, attending.

**Reaching Concensus**

By then a consensus had emerged that the conflict in Northern Uganda "can only be successfully resolved if there is a comprehensive negotiation process resulting in a peaceful settlement, including a resettlement and reintegration program and an environment in which reconciliation can take place."

Kacoke Madit underlined its commitment to "working to develop dialogue and to building trust between parties to the conflict; and between them and the Acholi people into whose midst the ex-combatants must eventually resettle, with the ultimate aim of bringing about direct negotiations between the LRA and the government of Uganda."

These Big Meetings were organized by a seven-member Secretariat based in London which functioned as coordinating point for not only Kacoke Madit but partner and community groups within and outside Uganda – an entire network of regional co-coordinators based in Uganda, southern Africa, USA, Canada, Scandinavia and the rest of Europe.

The role played by this secretariat was not limited to promoting peace. For example, it focused on conflict-sensitive international approaches to the plight of war-affected children, and lobbied for whatever amnesty was offered by the government to be implemented in the context of overall resolution of the conflict – rather than as an end in itself.

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Close liaison was established with political, religious and cultural groups based in Uganda.1 All these groups were given a voice on the Kacoke Madit Consultative Council, an advisory body designed to help develop and implement policies and resolutions for the Secretariat. Some were directly involved in ongoing – if largely unsuccessful - efforts by civil society groups in Northern Uganda to mediate between rebels and government. The Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative, for example, tried to get rebels and government around the negotiating table, though its efforts were frustrated by the intensity of the ongoing conflict.

Through these inter-linked efforts and initiatives, different strands of Acholi community, at home and abroad, were able to discuss peace and post-war development plans and strategies, and ways of attending to the socio-economic and development needs of war-ravaged districts.

The worldwide network of community groups and organizations that emerged, began working together towards a common purpose that led, eventually to Acholis, other Ugandans and interested groups from the international community, reaching consensus to resolve the conflict by peaceful means.

The annual meetings were not just gatherings to share peace ideas. They served as a forum at which various parties, involved in a variety of related actions, had a chance to share a variety of experiences and ideas. They also heightened awareness about what was happening in Northern Uganda and explored different positions and approaches. Contacts made during these meetings allowed the different interest groups to be more aware of each other's positions and get exposure to on-the-ground realities.

**Quiet Diplomacy**

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After the last meeting in 2000, attention shifted to promoting dialogue between the Museveni government and Acholi civil society about past experiences and suitable approaches in building better understanding. KM continues to lobby the Ugandan government, the government of Sudan, the rebels, and the international community, to accept dialogue to end the violence. This "quiet diplomacy", says Nyeko Caesar Poblicks, one of KM's leaders, is more "far reaching" than when carried out in the glare of publicity.

Using a variety of methods, including the internet and a weekly email-based newsletter, the organization also disseminates information about the conflict and peace initiatives. It has started a Diaspora Volunteer Scheme providing opportunities for skilled and experienced people from Northern Uganda to return to affected districts and contribute to development, poverty alleviation, education and health care.

Over the nearly ten years of its existence, Kacoke Madit, serving as a voice of the Acholi people, has raised global awareness about the conflict and its consequences - especially the humanitarian cost. By establishing itself as a group that transcends political, religious, gender and other boundaries, it highlighted the existence of many voices appealing for peace in Northern Uganda. Its initiatives have helped stimulate support for peace among governments and NGOs and led to direct contacts between the government and the LRA. With external agencies having failed to "deliver peace", the onus for a resolution is on Uganda and Ugandans, says Nyeko Caesar Poblicks. "KM and its partners will continue to play their part in meeting the challenge."

**Contact**

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www.acholipeace.org

www.c-r.org/accord/uganda

**Note**

1 These included the Acholi Parliamentary Group (APG) which comprised all members of parliament from the conflict area; the Acholi Religious leaders Peace initiatives (ARLPI), a cross-denominational group working for peace and reconciliation; Acholi Development Association (ADA); Kitgum Peace Initiative (KPI), the Catholic Justice and Peace Committee, Peoples' Voice for Peace (PvP), the Council of Acholi Chiefs and other local stakeholders.

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## 14.2 Contributing to Peace at Home: Berghof Foundation in Sri Lanka

***Since their country achieved independence in 1948, many Sri Lankans have migrated to Europe, North America and Australia as well as to neighboring countries. Reasons vary, but from the mid-1970s ethnic differences and civil war have contributed significantly to this wave of emigration. As a result, large Tamil and some substantial Singhalese diaspora communities have emerged, both of which play a role within the politics of peace and war at home. Realizing this, the Berghof Foundation set-up different programs working with these groups.***

By Wolfram Zunzer*

The signing of a cease-fire agreement in 2002, presaged not only an increase in the social exchange between the separated parts of the country, but also increased interest from Sri Lankan diaspora, reflected in the large number visits and of short- and medium term investments. Given the West's heightened suspicion of immigrants generally after 9/11, and the almost complete absence of serious empirical studies on the subject, many publications in peace and security studies have fostered a negative image of the diaspora's role in peacebuilding. Given this background, the Berghof Foundation has initiated a program of action-oriented research and supported selected pilot project activities by key partner organizations. These activities are part of the Resource Network for Conflict Studies and Transformation of the Sri Lanka office, which was established with the mandate of enhancing and supporting the capacities for constructive conflict transformation already existing in the country.

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**Activities**

Work with the Sri Lankan diaspora was conducted in three phases. In phase one the communities in Germany and Switzerland were mapped and contacts were established. In phase two, which took place between 2002-2003, expert workshops, conferences and a diaspora dialogue study tour to Sri Lanka were organized. Currently, the activities with cooperating partners, especially with the Friendship Circle Berlin, the Tamil Rehabilitation Organization (TRO), and key individuals in the diaspora are being consolidated.

In October 2003 the Berghof Foundation organized a diaspora dialogue study tour for key community members from Western host countries. The main purpose of the study tour, which was joined by Sri Lankan diaspora from Great Britain, Switzerland, Germany, and Canada, was to learn, in an ethnically mixed group, about the socio-economic and political situation in all parts of the country. It was hoped that this would create closer links between strategic groups at home and diaspora groups abroad.

This approach has to be seen in the peace process at large, in which – based on the cease-fire agreement of February 2002 – a strategy giving priority to the socio-economic "normalization" of the war torn regions of the North and East was pursued. A major and as yet unresolved challenge to the peace process emerged in 2003 when the parties to the conflict were unable to agree on an institutional mechanism for the distribution of internationally pledged development funds. The knowledge, capacities, competencies, contacts and funds from the diaspora have subsequently attracted far greater attention, particularly that of the Tamil stakeholders.

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The study tour program included workshops on the socio-economic situation and provided opportunities for contributions from the diaspora communities in the South, in Jaffna, in Kilinochi and in the Eastern Province, including on-site visits, workshops and discussions with key representatives and a meeting with the head of the Government Peace Secretariat in Colombo. Experts provided input on the current challenges facing the political peace process and on the concept of the circulating diaspora. Many prominent members of local NGOs and government institutions met the group in a cordial atmosphere, giving rise to numerous informal contacts and ideas for collaboration. Participants were invited, exchanged concrete projects ideas and some follow-up activities are currently being organized such as support activities by the newly founded Transnational and diaspora Network for Development, Canada.

Another aim of the study tour, namely to learn in an ethnically mixed group about the socio-economic and political situation in all parts of the country was fully met. After the frequent and thorough discussions, many participants expressed an increased understanding of the other ethnic group's socio-economic living conditions and their challenges. Some Tamil group members also shared a personal experience: having been told by their families in the past not to go further than 50 km south of Colombo, as part of this group they were able to cross this notional border for the first time in their lives.

The last three years have seen a marked increase in the activities of the above mentioned organizations and many other Tamil and Singhalese organizations in Europe and Canada. Pro-peace advocacy activities in Switzerland and Germany have also increased, while the Tamil Rehabilitation Organization in Sri Lanka, as well as representatives from the state bureaucracy and the Sri Lanka office of the UN Development Program (UNDP) have signaled increasing

interest. The same is true with state-funded development and peace organizations in Europe, such as the German Technical Service (GTZ) and Swiss Peace.

**<Box> An unique opportunity for a lasting peace**

The conflict in Sri Lanka can best be characterized as ethno-political. Underlying the violent conflict, which began in the mid-1970s lies a struggle between the Tamil and Singhalese. Major outbreaks of violence in the 1990s have reinforced the division of the state into an North dominated by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and a South dominated by the government of Sri Lanka. The last major attempt to heal this schism was launched in 2002 under the newly inaugurated Prime Minister Ranil Wickramasinghe and with the support of Norwegian facilitators. Its outcome was the current cease-fire agreement and an initial series of negotiations between September 2002 and March 2003. In national politics, a new situation has occurred, as the social democrats (PA) under President Chandrika Kumaratunga together with the Marxist-nationalist Janatha Vimukht Peramuna (Peoples Liberation Front, JVP) won the elections in April 2004 with a very small majority, ousting the sitting Prime Minister, Ranil Wickramasinghe United National Party (UNP), who had signed the cease-fire agreement in February 2002 and re-launched negotiations with the LTTE. Sri Lanka is still in an interim or post-cease-fire phase, in which smaller groups such as the Muslims and upcountry Tamils have also made their voices heard. Having been in place for two years, the ceasefire agreement has lasted much longer than all previous agreements, and it has created a unique opportunity for achieving a lasting peace. Even though the framework conditions have deteriorated since the parliamentary elections on 2 April 2004 which resulted in a hung parliament, the vast majority of people living in Sri Lanka

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do not want to risk any re-escalation of the ethnic conflict. The essence of the conflict resolution process facilitated by Norway so far has found expression in the Oslo Declaration in 2002, aiming at a genuine federal Sri Lankan state. To attain this goal, a fundamental restructuring of the Sri Lankan state and the transformation of the LTTE from a purely military organization into a reliable political player is required.

**<end of box>**

**Conflict and Potentials**

The Berghof Foundation was motivated to work on the issue of, and to engage with, the Sri Lankan diaspora communities by its research into the role and theoretical potential of the diasporafor conflict transformation activities in Sri Lanka. Four key potentials were identified that make them important stakeholders in the political arena:

. A large number of Tamil organizations and individuals support the population in need in the North- East, as well as the organizations affiliated with the LTTE, through substantial money transfers.

. Many Western-based Tamils as well as the smaller group of Singhalese are highly qualified and some have accumulated large private assets. Since the cease-fire, some activities of this group in Sri Lanka, such as the acquisition of property, have increased.

. Remittances are a major part of the gross domestic product of Sri Lanka. It is estimated that more than 25 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is due to the influx of small sums of private capital and goods.

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. A comparatively high number of diaspora members are well-informed and politically pro-active, and due to the Internet are continually updated on the situation in Sri Lanka.

Through interaction with diaspora members Berghof developed two propositions, which underpin its specific perspective on the role of diasporas in conflict transformation in Sri Lanka. Firstly, as a "peace-connector", the Sri Lankan diaspora has a general potential for building peace and transforming the violent conflicts at home. Secondly, through fostering transnational relationship networks (temporary return of qualified experts/elites) and dialogue spaces (workshops, study tours etc.) the human capital (knowledge, capacities, competencies), and the socio-political capital (contacts and connections) in Sri Lanka can be increased.

That the abstractly identified potentials have already had some practical impact is illustrated by the activities of key and influential figures of the Sri Lankan diaspora in the framework of the official peace negotiations. The character of the peace negotiations between the LTTE and the government of Sri Lanka in 2002/2003 differed substantially from the 1995 and 2000 peace talks.

This time the international community had a strong interest in a constructive and peaceful settlement of the conflict, and was very willing to engage in its practice. Norway as the official facilitator of the peace talks, supported by the co-chairs Japan, the US and India, as well as many activities by Great Britain, Switzerland, Germany and the Netherlands, have internationalized the conflict. Functional elites served as bridges between the Sri Lankan political actors and the international political and socio-economic support structure. Below the macro-political level of the peace negotiations, NGOs in Sri Lanka initiated many peacebuilding and related socio-

economic rehabilitation activities. Existing NGOs expanded their portfolio and new organizations were founded. Here too the diaspora had been influential.

To assess whether and how the diaspora communities at large can become more involved in peacebuilding, their socio-political set-up needs to be better understood. The majority of diaspora are Tamils and, in fewer numbers, Singhalese, while, with some exceptions in the UK, Muslims are largely absent in the West. Both diaspora communities not only react to input from the larger political actors; they also exert influence themselves – at least on the level of formal and many informal networks and in providing economic support. There is a dialectical relationship between diaspora communities in the host countries, the home country, the LTTE and the Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL). While the first generation of refugees and economic migrants still hopes to return to Sri Lanka, the second and third generation want to return only for limited periods. The younger and often better educated second generation Tamils has the greatest potential for supporting the development of the still devastated North and East as well as for supporting the transformation of the LTTE from a purely military organization into an important political player. The same holds true with respect to modernizing political institutions and development administration in the South.

Preliminary investigations such as mapping and building up a network of key persons and experts on diaspora issues resulted in the identification of three organizations amongst others, with which the Berghof Foundation now cooperates. There are two important smaller associations of Sri Lankans in Germany, which have a politically engaged, multi-ethnic membership: the Sri Lanka Friendship Circle in Munich, and the Sri Lanka Circle in Berlin. Both associations are working for peace among the different ethnic communities in Sri Lanka and both

have shown that a peaceful coexistence - at least as migrants in host countries - is possible. In order to achieve their objectives, political discussions and cultural events are organized and projects on peace education in Sri Lanka supported. A follow-through of both associations is a new NGO, called the Society for Conflict Prevention, Democracy and Minority Rights (GEKODEM), which initiates projects in Sri Lanka for strengthening the knowledge about and acceptance of federal democracy.

A major actor in the generally very well organized worldwide Tamil diaspora is the Tamil Rehabilitation Organization (TRO) and other closely affiliated organizations. The humanitarian and socio-economic engagement of the Tamil diaspora for the North-East has largely been organized through the TRO. Their strength lies not only in organizing Tamils in the diaspora, but in its leading role in the implementation of socio-economic development measures in the North-East. Both external diaspora experts and the Berghof Foundation try to facilitate the organizational development processes of these groups, as demand is articulated and financial resources become available.

**Explorations**

In 2001 and 2002 explorations of the Sri Lankan diaspora in Germany and Switzerland through mapping and networking were central activities. At the end of 2002 a diaspora expert workshop with experts mostly from European countries was initiated to discuss the way forward for pro-peace diaspora work. It was a trust-building and dialog exercise, as different perceptions, hopes and fears of the Tamil, Singhalese, Muslim participants, as well as non-Sri-Lankan participants, vis-à-vis the peace process were exchanged. The changing relationships between the political

constituencies of diverse Sri Lankan diaspora communities and the political (peace) processes in Sri Lanka were also discussed in depth. Possible steps for actively involving the diasporain the interim phase of the peace process were debated.

Another activity in May 2003 was the conference "Peace talks and Federalism as the Solution for the conflict in Sri Lanka" in Munich, organized by the Sri Lanka Friendship circles. The 120 participants from all major European countries, Canada and Sri Lanka adopted a declaration, in which the dialogue between the government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE was welcomed and federalism was called "the only possible way of permanently resolving the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka". It was acknowledged that a federal system for Sri Lanka would re-mould the political and power structures of the island, taking into consideration the injustices suffered by all the people, especially by the minorities, and their fears for the future. The participants called for a democratic way of changing the people's attitude through media campaigns and public education programs.

The main purpose of the International diaspora Workshop in Loccum, November 2003 was to provide a forum for in-depth discussions on the role of diaspora in conflict dynamics and to identify existing opportunities to improve the integration of diaspora communities into processes of post-war reconstruction, reconciliation and peacebuilding. Three influential persons from different ethnic groups presented their interpretationof the current conflict situation in Sri Lanka, which started an in-depth discussion. Other specialists provided their input, for example on existing initiatives of diaspora communities in Switzerland, Norway, and Canada. Innovative ideas for expanding and deepening pro-peace and development activities were brain-stormed.

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**Challenges**

In comparison to the many Sri Lankan diaspora organizations that exist throughout the world, the Berghof Foundation could only foster a very limited number of pilot activities in the diaspora in support of the peace process. The Foundation will continue to support activities of key persons from the Sri Lankan diaspora, such as support for organizing dialogue events such as a Round Table Sri Lanka, diaspora(expert) conferences and workshops; action-oriented research on political attitudes and entry points for pro-peace activities in Western host countries, and facilitate the development and transformation of organizations such as Tamil Rehabilitation Organization, the Transnational and diaspora Network for Development Canada, and the Society for Conflict Prevention, Democracy and Minority Rights.

Over the last two years through mapping, workshops, study tours and by jointly reviewing activities with the partner organizations, Berghof experienced the great preparedness of organizations and individuals from the Sri Lankan diaspora to become more influential in the peace process at home. This is reflected in the large number of Sri Lankan diaspora organizations and individuals in all major Western countries which already support humanitarian, development and politically transformative initiatives in their home country. One major challenge is the obvious scarcity of funds available to NGOs for specific bridge-building activities such as dialogue workshops, second generation student exchanges, country-specific round table workshops or programs for supporting the time-limited engagement of experts in their home countries. Even though information and communication technologies make transnational communication relatively cheap, for personal trust-building, dialogue processes and

organizational capacity building, dialogue spaces based on personal encounters have to be regularly created, which demands adequate personal capacities and funding.

Another challenge is to determine how the impact of often rather broadly designed advocacy, development or dialogue initiatives from diaspora groups can become more focused such as to have a more direct impact on the level of the macro-political peace process. One way might be to emphasize mono-communal capacity building to increase the political impact on one party to the conflict. Still, the question remains, whether and for how long such a mono-ethnic capacity building shall be pursued given the often inverse power structures throughout the worldwide diaspora and the need for improving communication between representatives of the ethnic groups for achieving sustainable peace. Another way forward for many diaspora organizations and NGOs would be to develop a more focused and tailor-made strategy.

From a conceptual point of view a more comprehensive approach for strengthening the diaspora's potential for peacebuilding and development, should still be considered. One way would be to apply John Paul Lederach's famous insight that one needs to support activities from the diplomatic down to the grassroots level in an interlocking way to the transnational level in the case of Sri Lanka. Such a comprehensive strategy for fostering diaspora involvement in peacebuilding would need substantially more personal and financial resources, which will only become available if the donor agencies change of perception vis-à-vis the peacebuilding and development potential of diaspora groups can be turned into sustainable program policies.

At the same time action-oriented empirical research on entry points for peacebuilding and development through diaspora engagement needs to be intensified. In this respect it would be helpful if less normative assumptions would be taken for granted, such as about the political

orientation of diaspora communities in exile per se, and much more empirical research on political attitudes, remittances, circulation with the country of origin, and political preference structures would be the focus of scholarly attention. This in turn would make a major contribution to facilitating the development of more numerous and more strategically focused peacebuilding initiatives by diaspora groups and NGOs.

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# 15 Civilian Peacekeepers: Creating a Safe Environment for Peacebuilding

**Tim Wallis and Claudia Samayoa***

***Most people think of peacekeeping as a military activity, involving troops sent into a conflict area by the UN or some other official body to stop the fighting and restore order. In its broader sense, however, peacekeeping can include any activity that seeks to reduce violence and create a safe environment for other peacebuilding activities to take place. Many peacekeeping activities can be carried out just as effectively by unarmed civilians. This chapter looks at some examples of civilian peacekeeping as well as some of the issues involved.***

People cannot create or re-establish peaceful communities while they are being threatened, intimidated or attacked. A certain degree of personal security is needed in order to use any of the peacebuilding tools described in the other chapters of this book. The aim of civilian peacekeeping is to establish and maintain that minimum level of security that enables people to feel safe enough to move around, organize and take effective action to defend human rights and promote peace. Civilian peacekeeping cannot resolve a conflict or build peace, but it can enable other peacemaking and peacebuilding activities to take place.

Civilian peacekeeping involves a set of tools which have proven to be effective in deterring violent attacks and opening up the political space within which local people can engage in peacebuilding activities. The organizations which have developed and continue to use these tools do not necessarily see themselves as “peacekeepers”. Some describe themselves as “unarmed

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bodyguards" or "human shields". Others talk about being "witnesses", "monitors" or providing a "presence". All the activities included in this chapter, however, involve attempts to stop or deter violence and therefore we feel justified in using the generic "peacekeeping" term to describe them.

### *Deterring Violence, Changing Behavior*

All peacekeeping, whether civilian or military, has as its foundation the concept of a "presence which can deter violence and change behavior". During the Contra war in Nicaragua, attacks on border villages would cease whenever a delegation from Witness for Peace was in the area. At Israeli checkpoints on the West Bank, treatment of Palestinians has been markedly more civilized when journalists or foreign peace activists have been present. Such responses cannot, of course, be guaranteed, but establishing a "presence" has become an effective tool for averting violence in many parts of the world.

Monitoring of ceasefire agreements and of military or police activities is something that civilians have been doing alongside military peacekeepers for some time. In 1998-99, the entirely unarmed OSCE Kosovo Verification Mission was responsible for monitoring the withdrawal of Serbian troops and return of Kosovan refugees to their homes. Since 2000, civilian monitors with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) have been monitoring the border between Georgia and Chechnya. Civil society organizations have tended to focus on more specialist monitoring activities such as monitoring of election violence and policing of peaceful demonstrations.

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Protective accompaniment is a more specific peacekeeping tool developed by Peace Brigades International and now used by a number of other organizations working in Latin America and other parts of the world. This involves being with individuals (human rights activists, for example) or groups for up to 24 hours a day who are under threat of violent attack. It relies upon various forms of political pressure to dissuade the attackers from carrying out their threat. This has proved highly effective in certain situations, although it is dangerous to assume it will work in situations where the perpetrators of violence are not so susceptible to outside pressures.

Many people assume that peacekeeping is essentially about getting between opposing armies and preventing them from fighting. Unless the aim of a military intervention is to fight and defeat one or other party militarily, however, the only way a peacekeeping force can effectively "keep the peace" is if all sides consent to their presence and have already agreed to a ceasefire. Civilians are even less able to stand between opposing armies and make them stop fighting, although there have been valiant attempts to do just this. On a smaller scale, however, civilians have certainly "interposed" themselves between attacker and victim and in many individual cases this has prevented an attack from taking place.

**Brief Survey**

Civilian peacekeeping techniques have evolved in part from their military equivalents. However many techniques also have their own history which can be traced back to Gandhi and other visionaries who proposed purely nonviolent methods of preventing or stopping violence. In 1922, Gandhi proposed the establishment of a *Shanti Sena* or "peace army" made up of trained volunteers who would intervene nonviolently to prevent communal bloodshed throughout India.

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This *Shanti Sena* was later set up after his death and spread from India to other parts of Asia, where they continue to this day, although focused more on rural development than on civilian peacekeeping as such.

The civilian component of official UN peacekeeping missions has risen dramatically, now accounting for over one quarter of all UN peacekeeping staff. Purely civilian missions, such as those of the OSCE and the European Union, have also grown in recent years. The OSCE alone currently has over 1,000 international field staff and 2,000 local staff on eighteen missions throughout Eastern Europe and Central Asia. These are engaged in monitoring and promotion of human rights, elections, democratization and the rule of law as well as basic monitoring of violence and military activity. Other civilian missions have been established on an ad hoc basis, for instance the Bougainville Peace Monitoring Group, the Temporary International Presence in Hebron and the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission, all three official civilian missions but not directly under the auspices of the United Nations.

There has been a proliferation of civil society organizations engaged in peacekeeping activities since the launch of Peace Brigades International (PBI) in 1981. Growing itself out of earlier projects, it was the pioneering work of this organization in Guatemala during the early 1980s that demonstrated how effective this work could be and set the scene for other organizations to follow. During the 1980s and 1990s, Witness for Peace, Christian Peacemaker Teams, Balkan Peace Team, Cry for Justice (in Haiti) and the International Service for Peace in Chiapas (SIPAZ) brought larger and larger numbers of Europeans and North Americans face to face with the realities of conflict and began to make a significant impact on the ability of local groups to function and organize in those regions.

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In 1994, the Ecumenical Monitoring Programme for South Africa (EMPSA) brought over 400 people to South Africa to help monitor and prevent violence before, during and after the first post-apartheid elections in that country.

Since the second Palestinian *intifada* began in 2001, many hundreds of people have gone to be part of the international presence there, through organizations such as the International Solidarity Movement, Grassroots Initiative for the Protection of the Palestinians (GIPP), United Civilians for Peace, the Women's International Peace Service for Palestine and the Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI).

**Challenges**

The changing nature of civilian peacekeeping is illustrated by the Bantay Ceasefire case in this chapter, where an intervention in the South is by external groups also from the South. With the emergence of the South as an actor in this field and not only as a passive recipient of interventions from the North, other issues about the nature of civilian peacekeeping have arisen. For Northerners, civilian peacekeeping has been largely seen as an activity for external third parties, but there are conflict situations where local groups can play the role of peacekeeping more effectively than outsiders. In Colombia, Guatemala, Sri Lanka, India, the Philippines and elsewhere the tools and techniques are being used more and more by local actors to prevent violence in their own communities In this context, the role of outsiders has become one of capacity building with local organizations as a way of recognizing and strengthening their own peacekeeping potential.

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As new patterns of violence emerge in the South that involve not only state sponsored violence, but also organized crime and transnational corporations, new and more creative solutions to the problem of tackling violence and intimidation are required, but protection by respected outsiders in many cases is still the only resort there is to create space for local groups to operate.

There is a continuing tension between the voluntary nature of many organizations engaged in this work versus the need for professionalism and specialist skills. When PBI began working in Guatemala, for instance, young volunteers with no training or experience would join the teams for as little as three weeks. Other projects in the Balkans and elsewhere have relied on young conscientious objectors doing their alternative to military service. These experiences have led many organizations to set higher standards for the level of maturity and specific skills required for the very sensitive situations faced by civilian peacekeepers. For example, PBI now requires that volunteers are at least 25 years old, undertake an intensive period of training and long distance learning, and commit to volunteering in the field for at least one year.

Another challenge facing civilian peacekeepers is their relation to governments and official (military) peacekeeping missions. Unarmed civilians may be able to influence the behavior of armed actors precisely because of their independence from governments. However, they may also need political and financial support from governments in order to be there at all. Finding the right balance between these two positions can be very difficult, particularly on the ground where complete separation from official missions operating in the same area may be impossible.

Many of the organizations involved in this work have grown out of a strong religious or ideological commitment to nonviolence. This has affected both the ways in which this work has

been described as well as the constituencies to whom it appeals. As the field becomes more professionalized, there is a growing tendency to describe it more pragmatically in language understood by more mainstream audiences. The tension between the ideological and pragmatic approaches to this work continues to manifest itself over issues such as nonpartisanship versus solidarity with local partner organizations.

Another tricky area facing civilian peacekeepers is their relationship to international media. Peacekeepers want to encourage media interest in the conflict and on the peace work that is being done locally. When these are not in themselves of mainstream interest, however, the media tend to focus on the personal stories of outside peacekeepers. This is sometimes helpful but can also be extremely counter-productive and therefore requires careful consideration by the organizations engaged in this work.

**Building Global Capacity**

Some of the lessons learned over the last half century of civilian peacekeeping are that neither military nor civilian peacekeepers can "stop wars" just by standing in the middle of the battlefield. There is a need for long-term commitment and for many different types of complementary activities to effectively stop wars or build a sustainable peace. The local conditio ns must be right for civilian peacekeeping to have any chance of success. Furthermore, it has proved to be crucially important that outsiders work with and through local partners on the ground and that they are backed up with political and other pressures from outside. Civilian peacekeepers, like their military counterparts, need proper training and preparation. They need

adequate backup support and an effective infrastructure to maintain the sustainability of the work over time.

The most comprehensive attempt to evaluate best practice and lessons learned in civilian peacekeeping to date was commissioned by Peaceworkers (USA) in 1999. This two-year research project looked at mandates, strategies, infrastructure, field relationships, personnel issues, training, recruitment, funding and political support behind the civilian peacekeeping efforts of fifty-seven civil society initiatives between 1914 and 2001. It also looked at a number of larger-scale civilian or predominantly civilian missions of the UN, OSCE and other official bodies.

Out of this research effort has come a global initiative of over ninety organizations from forty-seven countries to build the capacity for larger-scale civilian peacekeeping interventions by civil society. The Nonviolent Peaceforce was officially launched in India in 2002 and is currently running its first pilot project in Sri Lanka.

Although the Sri Lanka project is still on a comparatively small scale, the Nonviolent Peaceforce is building a pool of people with appropriate skills and experience for much larger missions if and when these are needed. It is also collaborating with other civil society organizations engaged in this work to ensure that best practices and lessons learned are shared and used to strengthen and improve future efforts in civilian peacekeeping.

As the Nonviolent Peaceforce experiments with the possibilities of civilian peacekeeping on a larger scale, other organizations in this field are continuing to develop and refine the techniques required to meet the challenges of violence in the twenty-first century. Still a largely untapped

resource, civilian peacekeeping is rapidly becoming an essential element of the peacebuilder's toolbox.

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Witness for Peace – USA

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## *15.1 An Experiment at Mixing Roles: Balkan Peace Team in Croatia and Serbia/Kosovo*

**Small groups of international volunteers tried to make a difference in Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia during the conflicts of the 1990's, simply by observing and making their presence known. They supported local activists in their work, finding a niche where internationals could fulfill a unique role.** By Christine Schweitzer*

In May 1995, after the re-occupation of Western Slavonia by the Croatian army, the volunteers belonging to Otvorene Oci decide that they want to establish a continuous presence of observers in the area, together with the volunteers from other international projects. They also decide to take care of the small circle of well-known, moderate Serbian leaders who, under Croatian domination, could become the targets of Croatian extremists and have to fear for their lives. One of them is the deputy-mayor of G., a Serb who had already experienced interrogation by Croatian authorities but was allowed to return home. Personal protection from United Nations soldiers is offered to him, but these military go off duty at 7 pm. The Croatian police, who are supposed to protect the house of the deputy-mayor, say that they cannot effectively hinder anyone to enter it. Because of this, a volunteer spent some nights in the politician's house, to witness what may happen. Only after the American ambassador and other politicians from Zagreb visit the local politician, he gains enough confidence in the promises that the UN surveillance will safeguard him and his property.1

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**Preventative Presence**

Between 1994 and 2001, in Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, volunteer civilians of the Balkan Peace Team2 (BPT) were involved in countless such actions. With eyes and ears, cameras and notebooks, they observed what was going on, and let others see what they were doing. The volunteer groups (usually numbering three people) accompanied peace and human rights activists, forming a preventive presence at evictions and court trials. They pursued official contacts, visited refugee camps, networked with local people, and, in general, tried to stimulate civil society by using their status as outsiders. They did more that just observe. The volunteers encouraged dialogue and functioned as a bridge between like-minded peacebuilders on opposing sides. They also helped to promote an information flow within and outside the region.

BPT started in the third year of the conflicts in former Yugoslavia. Officially, the war in Croatia had ended. A not-too-stable cease-fire was being monitored by a UN peacekeeping force (UNPROFOR). About one third of Croatia had become a self-proclaimed (Serbian) Republic of Krajina and was no longer under government control. In Bosnia, a more severe war had been raging since April 1992.

The international community presented one peace plan after another and offered humanitarian aid under UNPROFOR protection. In Kosovo, the Serbian province inhabited by around 90 percent ethnic Albanians, the Serbian police had established a system of intimidation and systematic human rights violations in reaction to Albanian protests aiming at self-determination and separation from Serbia/Yugoslavia. Many people predicted the war would spread next to Kosovo.

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BPT was founded to contribute to the "peaceful resolution of the conflicts, demonstrating an international commitment to peace, and working to increase that commitment." The founding organizations were almost all pacifist organizations. They sought an alternative to military intervention. BPT was conceived as a combination of dialogue-promotion, civil society development, human rights advocacy and, where necessary, direct protective work.

Unlike most other international NGOs active in the area, up to 1999 BPT did not set up independent projects. Rather it supported local activists in their work by identifying ways in which its status as an international project could be useful to them. BPT consciously tried to avoid replacing, or duplicating, the activities of local activists; instead, it tried to find a niche where internationals could fulfill a unique role.

**Protection, Dialogue and Civil Society Building**

The BPT volunteers were drawn from different countries. Most were Europeans and North Americans. Ranging in age from 23 to 60, they operated from local offices, usually in groups of two or three, living and working together.

In Croatia, BPT operated two such bases. One was in Zagreb (Karlovac, for a time), the other in Split. Their work there focused on providing support for human rights and peace groups. As in the example quoted above, one of its focus points in the early years was on the so-called "house evictions".

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This particular issue would not normally have been on the top of BPT's agenda, but since it was a major concern in Croatia, and particularly of human rights groups, the organization took it on.

Croatian authorities confiscated flats previously owned by the Yugoslav Peoples' Army, evicted the occupants – who were often Croats of ethnic Serbian identity – and turned over the flats to soldiers, or former soldiers, of the new Croatian army. In many cases, the manner in which this was carried out violated Croatian law. The occupants were normally told beforehand and were thus able to alert local human rights groups that, in turn, alerted BPT and other international observers (including OSCE and the media). In some cases the presence of human rights activists succeeded in helping the occupant.

In the summer of 1995, after the Croatian army re-occupied Krajina, BPT teams were among the first internationals to re-enter the area. They provided humanitarian support and protection to those Serbs who had decided to stay or were incapable of joining the exodus. Those left behind were mostly elderly. They were vulnerable to attacks by marauding paramilitaries who set houses on fire and killed Serbians.

This international presence served as a deterrent, although the small number of volunteers mustered by BPT was unable to provide the permanent presence which would have been necessary in hundreds of villages to stop the arson, killings and evictions which went on for some time after the re-occupation. Croatian security forces took no action to stop it. BPT's work in Croatia ended in 1998/99, when the situation was sufficiently calm and local groups no longer felt the need for the kind of presence BPT was there to offer.

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In the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), Balkan Peace team maintained a team that spent part of its time in Belgrade and the rest in Kosovo. (The attempt to set up full-time residence in Kosovo failed because of pressure from Serbian authorities, which did not encourage foreign presence there.)

The BPT team functioned differently in FRY than it did in Croatia. For one, the link to local partners was weaker. Especially in 1996/1997, the focus was on using multiple contacts and partnerships to groups and students in both Belgrade and Prishtina, to promote meetings between ethnic Serbs and Albanians in Prishtina. This was mainly dialogue support, or what in the world of diplomacy would be called "good offices".

The volunteers themselves did not participate in the meetings. They helped set them up, prepared the groups for the meeting (including, in one case, providing training in prejudice reduction), and accompanied Serbian activists from Belgrade and Vis to Prishtina to mitigate their safety concerns about traveling to "enemy country". Their work in FRY was disrupted by the Kosovo/Yugoslavia wars of 1998 and 1999 when NATO intervened militarily.

Afterwards, BPT was unable to resume its dialogue-based activities. Instead, the organization concentrated on trying to establish a youth center in a bi-ethnic community in Southeast Kosovo. At the beginning of 2001, unable to cope with the changed situation, and the huge influx of internationals in Kosovo after the war, this center was eventually closed down.

On the ground, BPT's volunteers not only worked with local groups; they were careful to make contact with international agencies involved in Croatia at that time, especially those dealing with refugees and internally displaced persons, and human rights in general. Its reports on the human

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rights situation in Croatia, in particular, were used more than once as reference sources by international NGOs and governmental organizations.

BPT clearly defined the limits of its cooperation. There were tactical and principled aspects to this. The tactical aspect emphasized non-partisanship. This was an important consideration, given the image of other international actors at the time, including EC observers and UNPROFOR, which were considered partisan and not particularly well liked in both Croatia and Serbia. Not riding with UN-provided cars, and not being seen to cooperate with them more than necessary, were distinct advantages for BPT in these countries.

The "principled" element had to do with avoiding, where possible, being too closely associated with the military – eschewing military protection, for example, and distancing oneself from human rights violators in general.

**Impact**

Balkan Peace Team has been one of quite a large number of peace team and civil peace service projects, which have been founded in the last twenty years. It by far cannot claim to be singular. Nevertheless, it has been a very important example of what internationals can do in situations of crisis and war.

BPT was an experiment in combining several roles that other projects tended to keep apart. Unlike many peace-building projects, it focused on human security/protection (civil peacekeeping) without rigidly limiting its role to this one aspect. And unlike Peace Brigades

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International or some peace teams in the realm of civilian protection, it allowed itself to get involved in a large variety of peace-building activities without feeling that doing so it would lose its character or endanger its non-partisanship.

2. The ways in which BPT made a difference included:

. Serving a *preventive* function in regard to potential human rights violations. It was the presence of international BPT volunteers that helped local NGOs in their work against house evictions in Croatia in 1994-1995. They also provided a protective presence in Krajina. BPT has been one of very few, for some time the only international NGO being present in certain areas. Its reports have been read (and used) by a number of large – including governmental – human rights monitoring organizations.

. Fulfilling a *mediating* role between local NGOs and international organizations or NGOs. In Croatia, BPT teams were often called upon because, as an international NGO, it had easier access to other "internationals" than local activists. Unfortunately, this was not only a question of language, but also whether internationals were prepared to take local groups seriously. This is actually a very important role for international NGOs because it is an essential element of empowerment of civil society.

. Serving as a *bridge* between local NGOs or private citizens and local authorities. Here again, they found it easier to use their international status to get access and respect. This proved important in helping Serbs who chose to remain in Croatia after 1995 struggle to gain/maintain legal status.

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. Mediating between NGOs from "different sides". As internationals, BPT had more freedom of movement between the conflict areas than local NGOs – between Croatia and Kraijna, between Serbia and Kosovo, between Croatia and FR Yugoslavia. This placed the organization in the position to *support dialogue* between organizations, and eventually to arrange meetings. The meetings between Serbian and Kosovan students and activists BPT mediated have had a very different character from other dialogue meetings because they did not happen in a place abroad (as most dialogue projects prefer), but they accompanied people visiting each other in their towns which gave the participants a much bigger feeling of ownership over the meeting than any international workshop can do.

. Carrying out an active *advocacy role*. BPT alerted other international organizations about, for example, the policy of Croatia regarding refugees from Bosnia (especially Bihac); the sometimes less-than-helpful role UNPROFOR played in Croatia; the situation in the Krajina and Eastern Slavonia; the situation in Kosovo after the war 1999 when local experts were snapped up by international organizations which were able to pay them much better.

. After being forced to leave, during the 1999 war, BPT volunteers traveled across Europe to inform people about what was going on, regroup as a team and plan what to do when they could enter the countries again. As soon as the worst violence was over, they returned.

Its grassroots' approach and its focus on supporting local groups rather than setting up "projects" as virtually hundreds of other NGOs have been doing in the region singles BPT out. At least until 1999 it did not fall into the trap of coming into the countries with its own agenda and finding so-

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called implementing partners" to carry this agenda out but followed the lead and heeded the needs of the local groups.

**The End of the Project**

In 2001 BPT, after conducting one of their standard evaluations, concluded that considering their resources and organization, they were not able to continue a good standard of work. The last BPT volunteer left the field in March 2001. The International Office, which was located in Germany, was eventually closed.

The organization can look back on its work with a degree of satisfaction. One of its main achievements was the degree of co-operation reached with local groups. Except for the last phase of the Kosovo war in 1999, BPT did not seek to do projects on its own. It tried to avoid the trap of "peace colonialism" by focusing on strengthening self-reliance. It acted only on invitation and tried not to duplicate the work of others. It did not want to supplant what it considered to be the task of local groups, or make them its implementing partner for an agenda developed elsewhere. Rather, it saw itself as a civilian peacekeeping body, motivated by the goal of preventing violence and human rights violations.

BPT managed to set-up a system with a General Assembly, a Coordinating Committee, Subgroups, an International Office and the volunteer groups in the field that made it possible for the coalition to work together successfully. Therefore, offering an example for future cooperation between different groups. A singular achievement of this body was the example it provided of

practical international cooperation between peace groups and peace services – as against conferences/advocacy or gathering at major international events.3

The work of the BPT has been documented fairly well, enabling a thorough account of what happened, the evaluation and the lessons learned. In general, BPT has been deemed as a valuable asset to the attempt of reconciliation on the Balkans.

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**Contact**

Balkan Peace Team was dissolved in 2001/2002. Questions on the project should be addressed to the author. E-mail: CSchweitzerIFGK@aol.com

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The archives of BPT are in the Dutch Stichting Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis (Amsterdam).

**Notes**

[1] Quoted with kind permission from Barbara Müller's study on Balkan Peace Team (forthcoming).

[2] The Balkan Peace Team was founded and run by a group of mainly European-based peace organisations, from Austria, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the UK. They included Austrian Peace Service, International Fellowship of Reconciliation, Peace Brigades International and War Resisters' International, Federation for Social Defence (Germany),

Brethren Service (US), Peace Brigades International, and MAN-Mouvement pour une alternative nonviolente (France). Its tightly-run coordinating office was based in Germany.

[3] The forthcoming study by Barbara Müller focuses a lot on this aspect.

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## 15.2 Protecting the Protectors: Peace Brigades International in Colombia

***In conflict zones across the globe, volunteers risk their lives by functioning as unarmed bodyguards for local human rights organizations and communities – in effect using their status as foreigners to deter potential killers.*** By Helen Yuill*

Violence is widespread – and, in some places, totally random - in Colombia. Four decades of armed conflict involving left-wing guerrillas, paramilitary forces and the national army, show no signs of ending. Caught in the middle is a civilian population exposed to the military, political and psychological violence of all sides. Colombian NGOs estimate that since 1995, internal displacement has affected three million people. Successive reports from UN agencies highlight the number of peacemakers, human rights advocates, trade union leaders, peasants, members of indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities and other civilians caught in the crossfire.

This situation attracted Peace Brigades International (PBI) to Colombia in 1994. Responding to an invitation from local human rights groups, the organization began its Colombia project. By 2004 forty volunteers were based in Urabá, Magdalena Medio, Medellín, and Bogotá supported by supported by personnel in London and at regional offices in Europe and North America.

The Colombia project follows the protective accompaniment model developed by PBI in other areas of conflict since it was set up in 1981. This involves protecting human rights defenders and displaced communities from threats of violence and creating space to address injustice through non-violent means.

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In 2003 PBI volunteers came from 25 countries but the majority were from Europe and North America. They accompany individuals and communities threatened by violence, in their workplaces, to meetings and in their communities. The hope is that the presence of foreigners at the side of the intended victims will dissuade potential killers.

**Deterring Attacks**

The whole approach may appear dangerous and foolhardy to some. But there is a clear multilayered method at local, national and international levels to deter attacks by making it known that there will be an international response to whatever violence a PBI-volunteer witnesses.

*"Accompaniment extends the boundaries of the international community beyond governments and the UN. International volunteers are a bridge between the threatened activists and the outside world. They embody international concern for the protection of human rights."*
(Liam Mahony and Luis Enrique Eguren: "Unarmed Bodyguards: International Accompaniment for the Protection of Human Rights." (1997)

The teams share information and raise concerns about the situation of the organizations they accompany with civilian and military authorities as well as state entities, NGOs, the church, the diplomatic corps, and international organizations (the organization has associate status with the UN Department of Public Information).

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PBI, and others involved in protective accompaniment, must ensure that a number of factors are in place to maximize effectiveness. They must know who the aggressor is. The aggressor must be clearly informed that PBI intends to begin accompaniment in a given area and that repercussions will follow if there is an attack. Further, PBI must be able to communicate to the aggressor what types of action are unacceptable (physical intimidation, telephone threats, etc.) and must convince the aggressor that it has international credibility.

By maintaining close ties with military and government officials, the diplomatic corps, international governmental organizations and UN representatives, PBI provides assurance to local activists that actions against them will attract immediate international response. The volunteer teams are supported by an international structure of project offices. Eighteen country groups are responsible for recruiting and training volunteers, fund-raising, publications, outreach and maintaining and activating a support network of members of parliament and congress, international NGOs, prominent church leaders, members of government and the diplomatic corps.

These networks are activated to apply pressure on the government and country concerned in cases of high levels of threat or to prevent the escalation of violence. The country or government involved is reminded of their obligations to protect human rights defenders and displaced communities under international humanitarian law and the UN declaration on the protection of human rights defenders.

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***Creating Neutral Zones***

The influence of this network was demonstrated in Colombia when Gabriel Torres, a worker for Credhos, the Regional Committee for the Defense of Human Rights, was detained by the army and accused of possessing guerrilla leaflets. PBI immediately set its lobbying machinery into motion. The Dutch and Spanish ambassadors were called. They in turn called Colombia's deputy Defense minister. A few hours later, Torres was released. As one soldier put it:

*"Let him go, or else we'll have those people calling us all day."*

Inside Colombia, PBI works with eleven NGOs and two internally displaced communities. These local organizations provide support for families of the disappeared, give legal advice, defend civil, political, economic and social rights, protect the human rights of displaced communities, and research and document human rights abuses.

It has a particularly strong presence in Urabá, an area of great economic and military importance in northwest Colombia. The region is rich in timber resources and regarded as a possible site for an inter-oceanic canal and an extension of the Pan American Highway. It is also associated with contraband and arms and drug trafficking. For these reasons it is one of the regions most seriously affected by armed conflict involving paramilitary organizations, the Colombian army and guerrilla forces, principally FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia). Since 1998 the FARC has intensified military action in an attempt to reclaim territory lost five years earlier. Not everyone in Urabá wants conflict. In San José de Apartadó, a settlement consisting of a village and several outlying hamlets, local people were forced to flee their homes because of

attacks by paramilitary forces in 1996 and 1997. Some 16,000 people were displaced, whole villages emptied and two community leaders killed. In response to the crisis, local people met the bishop to discuss the possibility of creating a "neutral zone". They called on all armed actors not to involve them in the armed conflict.

**<Box>**

**A day in the life of a PBI volunteer**

"Waking up in Turbo means gradually becoming aware of the whirr of the ceiling fan and the tapping of the computer keyboard. I crawl out from under my mosquito net and stumble out of my bedroom. Evelyn is at the computer. She has been up for some time. Tomás is going to bed after a long night's work on one of the bi-weekly news bulletins we produce. Breakfast is coffee and a mango - one of the principle luxuries of life in the tropics. I sit picking mango fibres from my teeth and reading the papers, scouring each page for any report on the Urabá region. Soon Marta and Juan arrive, sunburnt and filthy after several hours in a small motorboat on the Atrato River. Juan and Marta talk of their trip, of the heartbreaking contrast between the beauty of the subtropical rainforest and the hideous reality of a war in which the these Afro-Colombia and indigenous people are seen as obstacles in a military campaign to gain control over territory, natural resources and arms and drug trafficking routes. After lunch, Evelyn and I drive from Turbo, through the banana plantations, to the nearby town of Apartadó. The road between Turbo and Apartadó is one of the best in the country. It's smooth, tarmacked surface is testament to the importance of the banana trade to Colombia's economy.

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Some leaders of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó have asked us to accompany them to a meeting with the commander of the local army brigade to insist on their rights to return to their land. The community leaders are silent as we walk past the garrison parade ground, uncomfortable, nervous and frustrated at the lack of progress.

Evelyn and I greet the commander as we enter his office. We have spoken with him several times before in our own meetings. We explain that we are here accompanying the representatives of the Peace Community and then we leave and wait outside - it is not our job to intervene in these meetings. Two hours later we walk out of the garrison together. The three community members are now confident, proud and relieved. Back in Turbo we sit down for a long meeting to share all the information we are constantly gathering and plan our activities for the next week. Before starting work with PBI I worried about insomnia. I imagined that the stress of the job would keep me awake at night, but I invariably collapse into bed, physically and emotionally exhausted and I'm quickly lulled to sleep by the whirring of the fans."

*Excerpted from the diary of a PBI volunteer in Urabá*

**<End box>**

In March 1997, they set up a peace community with support from the Inter-congregational Commission of Justice and Peace, the Centre for Research and Popular Education (CINEP), the Diocese of Apartadó and Pax Christi Netherlands. However, as advocates of nonviolence in such a polarized region the community has become a target of intimidation from all sides, including military and paramilitary incursions. This has resulted in the killing of 135 members of a community of 1,000 people.

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PBI maintains a team of thirteen international volunteers in Urabá. They are particularly active in San José de Apartadó, and in another Peace Community in the Cacarica River basin and have close contact with several other community initiatives in the region. PBI, working with Colombian and other international NGOs, pressures the government to uphold international and national laws relating to the protection of displaced persons and dissuade potential perpetrators of attacks on the community.

**Risks Involved**

In this highly polarized situation PBI and other national and international organizations have to counteract suspicions as to their sympathies. But it has been able demonstrate the strength and influence of its network – as happened in 2003, after an article in the *Wall Street Journal* raised questions about whether PBI and other organizations were working in support of guerrilla forces. The contents of the article were distributed widely, including in the town of Turbo where PBI has an office. On December 9, 2003, two PBI volunteers accompanying a member of the Peace Community who had received death threats, were traveling in a vehicle clearly marked as belonging to PBI along a road with regular military checkpoints.

They were stopped and threatened by four armed civilians. The volunteers were ordered to leave the vehicle and hand over the keys. Their mobile phones, chequebooks, identity documents and a large sum of money belonging to the Peace Community, were stolen. The attackers verbally abused the PBI volunteers, told them they were aware of PBI's work in the region, but that it was of no consequence to them. The organization concluded that this was no isolated act of robbery

but fitted into a wider pattern of intimidation aimed at undermining the Peace Community. The local and international PBI network was activated.

Direct appeals were made to high government officials, calling for an investigation into the events. Local NGOs issued statements of solidarity. For the next nine months, no further attacks were carried out against the community while PBI volunteers were present.

**Impact**

PBI's work in Colombia has won praise. An external evaluation of the Colombia Project, published in August 2004, said it had limited the number of attacks on communities.

*"In the midst of barbarity their presence has enabled us …to continue accompanying the displaced communities, has prevented the number of killed, disappeared, tortured and displaced persons from multiplying…it has meant protection for us but more importantly the chance for the peace communities to rebuild all that has been destroyed,"*

(Danilo Rueda of the Intercongregational Justice and Peace Commission, Urabá)

PBI has received many prestigious awards for its work, including the 2001 Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders, granted annually to an individual or an organization who has displayed exceptional courage in combating human rights violations.

The PBI policy of entering an area of conflict after having been invited by at least one part or stakeholder, should be seen as a good code of conduct for other "outsiders" looking to work in

conflict areas. By protecting the protectors, PBI not only protects the person or orga nization it accompanies, but also the people/societies that benefit from the work of that organization. In that way, it effectively opens political space for these groups to work in.

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***15.3 Human Shields To Limit Violence: Witness for Peace in Nicaragua***

***In the 1980s, Witness for Peace organized visits by delegations of U.S. citizens to Nicaragua to operate as human shields, preventing rebels from attacking villages. On their return in the U.S., the grassroots delegations incited intense public debate about Washington's Central America policy. The strategy contributed to the decision by the U.S. Congress to cut off military aid to the Contra rebels. It even may have helped to avert an all-out U.S. invasion of Nicaragua.***

On April 9, 1983, Gail Phares, a former missionary of the U.S. Maryknoll movement, led a delegation of thirty religious activists from North Carolina into the small Nicaraguan farming community of El Porvenir, a tobacco-growing region close to the border with Honduras. El Porvenir had been under attack by the U.S.-backed Contra rebels. When the U.S. citizens entered the area a calm set over the village. As they were watching the Contra rebels who were clearly visible in their camp at the other side of the valley, one of the American visitors asked, "Why aren't they shooting now?" "They're not shooting because they can see you," Phares said someone told the group. The experience was an eye-opener to many on the delegation, including Gail Phares.

The mere presence of U.S. citizens in a war strife zone in Central America, a region since long perceived to be part of the U.S. sphere of influence, turned out to have huge impact on the daily life of villagers and townspeople. American citizens of different rank and file could bring peace, simply by traveling south to Central American regions of tension. Many delegation members,

most of whom were religious with strong ties to churches, took this as an inspiration to pursue on this road. They helped the movement to develop. Witness for Peace (WfP), as the organization was dubbed, grew to an organization of 16,000 people and has helped thousands of citizens to travel abroad and conduct advocacy activities in the U.S. Witness for Peace also widened its scope to other countries in the region as well as in the Caribbean, including Cuba and Haiti.

**Seeking an Effective Response**

The attacks of Contra rebels on the small town of El Porvenir and other villages in Nicaragua were part of a new phase in Nicaragua's decades old civil war. The small Central American country, which borders both to the Pacific and the Caribbean Sea, until the late 1970s was led by the autocratic regime of the Somoza family and its cronies. Since 1961, this regime was being fought by the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), or Sandinistas. In 1979, the Sandinistas overthrew the Somoza dynasty. Their success was largely due to the popular support they had enjoyed throughout the country. The Sandinistas - a coalition of Marxists, Roman Catholic priests and liberation theologians - inherited a country riddled with inequality. U.S. President Ronald Reagan and many others in the considered the Sandinistas a communist threat. Soon after the Sandinistas took power, the U.S. began supporting rebels stationed in Honduras and Costa Rica, known as the Contras, in an attempt to topple the government. The Contras - or "counter revolutionaries" - waged attacks in the Nicaraguan countryside - burning villages, destroying convents, schools, and hospitals.

Various peace activists, church groups, and students of Latin American liberation theology in the U.S. and Canada had been interested in the struggles of ordinary people throughout Latin

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America since the 1960s. By 1983, many came to believe that the U.S. was using the Contras to plan a full-scale invasion and occupation of Nicaragua. Groups traveled to Nicaragua to better understand the situation and seek an effective response.

The initial visit led by Gail Phares to Nicaragua in April 1983 was part of these ongoing activities. Phares represented the Carolina Interfaith Task Force on Central America, a faith-based movement dedicated to change U.S. policies which it said contributed to "poverty and oppression" in Central America. It had been undertaking advocacy campaigns and organized workshops to put Central America on the agenda. It also send delegations to the region. However, using these delegations as "human shields" had not been its initial intention. The realization that the presence of foreign citizens could have such an immediate effect on the situation in a region of civil war was relatively new. It was the result of the experience in El Porvenir. One of the members of the delegation said.

*"If all it takes to stop this killing is to get a bunch of Americans down here, then let's do it,"*

Gail Phares met with Sandinista officials. "What do you think about having a nonviolent presence in the war zone?" she asked. She got clearance to mobilize a citizen-led peace force. The group set a goal that year of bringing people from all fifty states into Nicaragua by July 4, the U.S. Independence Day. The plan received instant approval from American peace, religious and human rights groups. A first follow-up delegation including 157 people, arrived at the nearby town of Jalapa three months later to "stand with the Nicaraguan people", again in the

hope that their presence would deter Contra attacks. In 1984, Phares lead a 200-person delegation into Nicaragua, representing citizens from all U.S. states. "We became a national movement," Phares said. The group formed a coalition made up of concerned groups in the U.S., including mainstream churches, smaller churches such as the Quakers and Mennonites. Other organizations such as Peace Brigades International also supported the coalition.

As a new coalition, Witness for Peace agreed that a long-term team would be supported by short-term visits by delegations, lasting one or two weeks. The long-term team would organize and coordinate the visits of delegations to Nicaragua. Each long-term team member and short-term delegate was intensely trained prior to his or her visit to Nicaragua. Training included role-plays involving ambushes and kidnappings as well as documentation skills in order to be able to report on their experiences in a professional manner.

In addition to living in villages at risk of violence, the witnesses - enjoying the relative protection that their U.S. nationality offered them - soon began following the Contras with notepads and cameras to record everything that they saw. In some places their work took the form of taking testimonies from those who were allegedly brutalized by the Contras. According to human rights organizations, including Amnesty International, human rights abuses were committed by both the Sandinista government forces and the Contras during the war. The reports by the WfP delegations quickly became one of the most widely used sources of information for the international press reporting on the Contra-war.

Upon their return to the U.S., delegations visited local communities all over the U.S. to talk about their experiences and, in most cases, to advocate for ending U.S. assistance to the Contras. In addition, every time the Congress was about to vote on another round of funding for the

Contras, the Witness network sprung into action, organizing mass mailouts, meetings and vigils outside every congressional office in the U.S.

**Impact**

The approach seemed to work. By 1984 so many members of Witness for Peace had returned from Nicaragua and exposed the reality of the war and the consequences of U.S. support to the rebels, that Congress, contrary to the will of the Reagan administration, cut off funding for the Contras. According to some observers, the fact that the movement was non-partisan and appealed to mostly religious people from different ages and socio-economic backgrounds made its impact in the arena of political advocacy even stronger. “The effect of older church women, business leaders, nuns, and others than the ‘usual peace suspects’ had a large impact on Congressional leaders and many others,” according to Michael Westmoreland-White, who joined WfP delegations several times.

Despite the fact that the Reagan government, as became clear a few years later, continued to support the Contras, through the so-called "Iran-Contra scandal" - consisting of illegally selling arms to Iran and funneling the revenues of these transactions to the Contras - the WfP's work has been applauded as being effective. It had impact in several ways, both on the ground in Nicaragua and in the political arena of Washington.

Thomas Walker, a professor at Ohio University and author of *Nicaragua: Living in the Shadow of the Eagle*, was quoted as saying in the *National Catholic Reporter*, in an article published in August 2003 reflecting on the establishment of WfP twenty years earlier:

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"Witness for Peace I think prevented war. It made it much more difficult for the United States to pursue an aggressive policy against Nicaragua if Americans of conscience were in the way."

In another assessment of WfP's impact on developments in Nicaragua, the Oxford Research Group pointed out that WfP

"certainly provided a specific and general deterrent to Contra attacks by accompanying villagers and living in villages at risk of violence".

During the period that WfP delegations were stationed in Jalapa no Contra attacks occurred against the region. Some analysts, however, pointed to other causes for the absence of attacks, such as the reportedly poor military state of the Contras and the national army at the time. In a book about WfP's Nicaragua experience, Ed Griffin Nolan argues that the presence of U.S. citizens in Nicaragua may actually have helped prevent a U.S. invasion of the country. A significant number of U.S. citizens being located at a port close to where U.S. ships were patrolling in particular could have kept the U.S. from invading Nicaragua, he wrote. This claim has been subject to much debate. According to the Oxford Research Group's there is no doubt whatsoever that one of the biggest achievements for WfP was to make U.S. policy in Central America "very public, long before it might have become so in their absence."
"What does Witness for Peace's story teach us?", Michael L. Westmoreland-White rhetorically asked on a more personal note:

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"I think it teaches us to dream big and act boldly. A small group of peace activists, most with church connections, with little money and no time to waste, created a thriving citizens' movement, took on an aggressive imperialist military policy of a hugely popular U.S. president during a time of national self-righteousness and aggression and -- at least partially -- won. (...) They tapped into the hidden springs of spiritual power in faith groups, especially the Christian churches -- even some very conservative Protestant evangelical churches."

The initiative of WfP also met criticism. Proponents of the policy regarding Nicaragua, those who favored U.S. assistance to the Contras, obviously were not happy with WfP's interventions. In a book published in 1986 called *The Betrayal of the Church*, authors Edmund W. Robb and Julia Robb, voicing concern among conservative church members, criticized WfP for failing to scrutinize the Sandinista regime, which they said was suppressive of religion and churches. The book also suggested that WfP delegations who went on trips to Nicaragua were not offered an opportunity to assess and judge the situation in Nicaragua independently. They suggested the organizers of the visits had a very clear opinion, as had many citizens volunteering to participate (see: *The Betrayal of the Church*. Published by Crossway Books/Good News Publishers Westchester, Illinois).

**Extending Activities**

Nicaragua's 12-year civil war formally ended in June 1990 with the demobilization of the Contras. WfP continues to be committed to fight poverty and inequality in Nicaragua and other Central American countries. Over the years, it has expanded its program work. Currently it has

an office and permanent presence in Mexico, Cuba, Nicaragua and Colombia. The organization is also very active in Guatemala and Haiti, using the same approach it developed in Nicaragua. Since 1983, over 10,000 people have traveled to Latin America and the Caribbean with Witness for Peace. Delegations, the organization stated, are the cornerstone of Witness for Peace programs, providing "transformative" experiences that contribute to cross-border understanding and lasting bonds of solidarity.

The people gathering under the banner of Witness For Peace believe that many aspects of U.S. foreign policy with regard to Latin America and the Caribbean contribute to poverty and injustice. They also believe that many actions and approaches taken by private companies doing business in these regions have a similar detrimental effect on the local population. The people of WfP seek to change these government and corporate policies. According to a WfP statement:

"As U.S. citizens, we feel it is our right and responsibility to demand policies and practices that promote human rights and justice for all peoples throughout the Americas."

Since 1990, it has focused on the effects of economic globalization, many of which are destructive for developing countries, the organization believes. It seeks to change the policies of international financial institutions, such as the IMF and the World Bank, that, according to WfP not always have the intended outcome in developing countries.

**Personal Transformation**

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A key characteristic of WfP's approach is that to a large extent it hinges on the personal transformation that takes place in people who visit Central America. Testimony after testimony from former delegates relates that WfP changed their lives. The delegates' encounter with local people and a different culture has impact on how they perceive their own reality and that of U.S. society and politics. Although many of them already were highly critical of U.S. foreign policy prior to their Witness experience, the act of actually going to a different region and seeing some of the consequences of U.S. policies on the ground leads to a deeper commitment to seek to change U.S. foreign policy at home. Many delegates are inspired to start working for a cause in their communities in the U.S. or, if they had already been engaged in this type of work, to do so more passionately than before.

Tanya Snyder, a former member of a WfP team in Colombia, said:

"In the early days of Witness for Peace, volunteers physically accompanied members of communities at risk. But arguably, the more important work - and what we currently focus is on - is the transformative experience of the delegates themselves and the change they can create back home in their own communities."

Snyder, who has been working in Washington to help WfP delegates become "more effective activists" said working toward a radical shift in U.S. policies can feel like a constant swim upstream.

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"But once you know a country and its people, destructive policies mandated by the Capitol have a profound impact on your life and the lives of those you love. You become part of the struggle, part of the global community of solidarity, part of the solution."

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**Resources**

*Witness for Peace: A Story of Resistance.* By Ed Griffin-Nolan. Westminster: John Knox Press, 1991.

*The Story of Witness for Peace. A Random Chapter in the History of Nonviolence.* By Michael L. Westmoreland-White. June 2003

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***15.4 Grassroots and South-South Cooperation: Bantay Ceasefire in the Philippines***

***Peace accords in conflict zones usually include a commitment by combatants to cease fire. How to hold them to their word is always a major problem. On the Philippine island of Mindanao, the Bantay Ceasefire team sought wide participation in monitoring.*** By Diomedes Eviota Jr.*

*"We have seen how the Bantay Ceasefire team helped in the common desire of both the government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, to preserve peace on the ground…I think credit has to be given where credit is due."*

With these words, Lt. Gen. Rodolfo C. Garcia, then vice-chief of staff of the armed forces of the Philippines, was addressing a joint meeting of the government's Coordinating Committees for the Cessation of Hostilities (CCCH), which he headed, in February 2004 in Davao City.

At the time, Bantay Ceasefire, a network set up to monitor a ceasefire on Mindanao Island between the Philippine government and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), was one year old. The fulsome praise heaped on the network by this high official, was timely acknowledgement of its contribution in the maintenance of a bilateral ceasefire signed on July 18, 2003. It also reflected the widespread support, recognition and appreciation for the monitoring mission among most stakeholders in the conflict.

The 2003 accord was the latest in a series of attempts to stop the violence that has afflicted Mindanao for decades (see also the case on the Philippine Business for Social Progress' activities

on Mindanao, elsewhere in this publication). The island is the only place in the Philippines where Muslim (or Moro) and indigenous Lumad peoples live alongside "majority Filipinos". For more than thirty years, groups asserting rights to traditional lands and demanding self-determination have been in conflict with the government in Manila. Tens of thousands of people have died as a result.

The "Final Peace Agreement" signed in 1996 between Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the government, was supposed to have ended the conflict. It was anything but "final". In the wake of its signing, some leaders of the MNLF joined the government.

Still, the MILF - which split from MNLF in 1977, and was sidelined in the peace process - continued its armed struggle for a separate independent Islamic state. Various offensives were launched against MILF – in 1997, 2000 and 2003.

The insurgents reciprocated these so-called "all-out" wars. In between, there were negotiations and peace agreements. Each accord, including a "general cessation of hostilities" agreement on July 18, 1997, was followed by mechanisms to monitor compliance with ceasefires.

**Grassroots**

The 1997 agreement, for example, provided for setting up an Independent Fact-finding Committee mandated by both government and MILF to help settle conflicts arising from alleged ceasefire violations. This Committee supplanted an earlier body, the Interim Cease-Fire Monitoring Committee, and, eventually, it handed over its monitoring functions to Quick Response Teams. Academics and representatives of civil society largely led these initiatives.

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Bantay Ceasefire was distinctly non-official and mandated by grassroots people living in conflict areas. In terms of focus, it acted more as a conflict prevention body. It maintained constant vigilance to prevent the outbreak of local conflicts that could spark bigger and more destructive wars. It detected potential conflicts at *barangay* (village) level, promptly reported them to the network, and the joint CCCH and Local Monitoring Teams. It set up investigative teams, and disseminated reports. Its approach was broad-based: the local Catholic churches and Muslim bodies were engaged to mediate village-level conflicts.

The network was conceived nearing the end of 2002. With the existing ceasefire between government and the MILF appearing shaky, a core group met to address the situation. Among them were Initiatives for International Dialogue (IID), a Davao-based regional organization; the Immaculate Conception parish in Pikit, Cotabato; and the Mindanao Peoples' Caucus.

This last-named body was a grassroots organization formed from among the three different groups present on Mindanao - Muslims, indigenous peoples and Christians - after a disastrous "all-out" war launched in March 2000. This "all-out" war came after two successive Philippine presidents failed to reach a peace deal with the 20,000-strong MILF. Nearly one million residents in Central Mindanao were displaced by this action.

**South-South**

Bantay Ceasefire's approach was underpinned, also, by participation of countries from the South. Its monitoring exercises were undertaken in partnership with not only NGOs and humanitarian and evacuee protection groups in Mindanao, Manila-based peace formations and foreign

civilians. The thinking behind this was that if groups from the South, especially within the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) region, shared common problems - insurgent groups, ethnic-based conflicts or tensions arising from religion – they could share solutions.1 This served to further internationalize the Mindanao conflict – which had already seen overseas involvement. Malaysia had facilitated peace talks between the Philippine government and MILF. Indonesia played a role in the 1996 peace agreement. Other Asian member countries of the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) used their "good offices" to help resolve other problems in the south of the Philippines. The United States Institute for Peace was asked by the Bush administration to facilitate negotiations to help create an "equitable and durable peace agreement" to the decades-long conflict.

**No Arms**

A typical Bantay Ceasefire mission starts out by forming a team to investigate reports of skirmishes. Contact is made with the CCCH to obtain clearance, if needed, from military commanders (or the local MILF "base command") and village officials (*coordination*).

Once in the field, BC teams try to get the widest range of interviews and documentary evidence about the reported incident. Special attention is paid to the plight of civilians and whether or not human rights have been violated (*fact-finding and documentation*). Where possible, an informal meeting is conducted to educate local people about the existence of a ceasefire agreement that prohibit "hostile" and "provocative" acts, and ceasefire mechanisms (*education*).

The mission helps civilians to safety, alerts government agencies to the plight of evacuees, and informs NGO support groups and aid agencies as to the needs of evacuees. In instances where

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the mission lasts more than a day, nightly assessments are done, and at the end of the mission, detailed findings and recommendations are made.

These findings concentrate on whether or not the incident was a ceasefire violation, and ways of protecting the truce. The packaged report is provided to the media, support groups and top government and armed forces officials, and to the MILF. Sometimes a press conference is arranged, or a meeting is held with relevant officials, to give recommendations or follow up on actions taken (*lobby and advocacy*). In case of a major war with high civilian displacement, a time-bound campaign such as "Stop the war!" or a humanitarian drive is launched (*campaigns*). Bantay Ceasefire tries to keep the CCCH informed about military activities that might endanger the truce or affect civilians. BC was successful, for example, in stopping the practice bombing runs of an air force plane in Barira, Maguindanao - a area involved in the "all-out" war of 2000 - that caused panic among civilians on the ground. It did this by informing the CCCH of the effects of the unannounced bombing exercises.

While on missions, the BC monitors do not carry arms. They are careful not to cross firing lines or enter hostile or dangerous areas and do their utmost to ensure the safety and security of members by coordinating movement with officials and local authorities. Because of its high credibility and good networking skills, BC is able to work through the barangay power structure, with the armed forces and the MILF, the churches and government agencies present in the area. Independence and neutrality are highly valued, so the monitors travel in their own vehicles and use their own resources even while on joint missions. They also carry proper identification.

In general though, BC's strategy is to work closely with the joint CCCH and Local Monitoring Teams, monitoring mechanisms formed by the peace panels. During 2004, it made joint missions

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with the CCCH and Local Monitoring Teams, but issued separate reports. When local ceasefire monitoring outposts were established in conflict "hotspot" areas, Bantay Ceasefire monitors were asked to monitor the permanent outposts alongside the government and MILF teams. This represented, in itself, a new monitoring mechanism on the ground.

**Major Missions**

The main Bantay Ceasefire activities are investigative field missions. Four of these were carried out in 2003. The first - "Bantay Ceasefire 1" - was conducted in four conflict-affected provinces to probe ceasefire violations and assess the status of provincial-level Local Monitoring Teams. It recommended the formation of a third-party group - preferably international in composition - to take the lead in ceasefire monitoring.

A year later, some seventy Malaysian and Brunei military monitors comprised an International Monitoring Team from the Organization of Islamic Countries, which supplemented local monitors in Mindanao.

In "Bantay Ceasefire 2", a grassroots mission team assessed two communities displaced by the February 2003 war. The team report supported the demand of the returning evacuees that military camps be moved further away as they presented a security risk to civilians.

"Bantay Ceasefire 3" in October 2003 centered on the effects of the massive government manhunt for escaped Indonesian terrorist Fathur Rhoman Al-Ghozi in the Lanao provinces (in the areas of the Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao). The BC report concluded that the hunt for Al-Ghozi, billed by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo as a "terrorism fight in the

southern Philippines", instead resulted in human rights violations and displacement in grassroots communities where the military believed the Indonesian fugitive was hiding.

"Bantay Ceasefire 4", conducted in December 2003, examined two obstacles to the resumption of formal peace talks between the government and the MILF: (1) the reported links of the MILF to the terror group Jemaah Islamiyah, as alleged by the government; and (2) the pull-out of government troops from Buliok complex, which the MILF cited as a "precondition" to the resumption of the talks. Bantay Ceasefire probed this reported link but found no evidence of foreign presence in the area. The government acknowledged the BC report, but made its conclusions subject to future periodic confirmations by the joint CCCH.

With regard to the military pullout from Buliok – something agreed by governmental and MILF panels in exploratory talks held in Kuala Lumpur in October 2003, as a condition for resumption of formal talks – the Bantay Ceasefire team that went to Buliok recommended a "repositioning" of Marine units in Buliok as a "confidence-building" gesture and to de-escalate the existing "eyeball-to-eyeball" situation between the Marines and the remaining MILF units in Buliok. Bantay Ceasefire provided regular updates until the military pull-out was completed in mid-2004.

**Expansion**

The four missions conducted in 2003 popularized the ceasefire agreement in the communities by translating agreements into local dialect. It lobbied for improvement in ceasefire mechanisms and documented the impact of military operations on civilians, especially on abuses and the

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effects on women and children. A weekly radio program, *MindaLinaw* (Peaceful Mindanao), started in 2004, provided updates on the ceasefire.

During the first nine months of 2004, BC conducted at least five more investigative or field monitoring missions aimed at smothering threats to the ceasefire. BC members also conducted dialogues in their communities to ensure support for permanent monitoring outposts.

To ensure its efforts are sustained into the future, BC has begun a program to train community monitors in early warning and detection skills. Nearly 100 volunteer monitors from nine villages in conflict areas of Maguindanao and seven villages in Pikit, Cotabato were trained in 2004. Village chiefs, who form part of the local government structure, were also involved. These developments indicated the growing acceptability of Bantay Ceasefire and the sense of ownership of people in the conflict areas.

Over the short term, the network plans to expand by recruiting new members, cultivating relationships with organizations, and documentation training for community volunteers. It also plans to continue ceasefire monitoring and lobbying of both the government and the MILF and plan with communities to sustain networking, logistics and trainings.

The Bantay Ceasefire network currently has some twenty organizations and peace networks as members. Some of these are community-based groups linked to peace networks based in Manila and the National Capital Region, and with international solidarity networks. This loose network is sometimes difficult to maintain, but provides volunteer monitors for missions, serve as outlets for BC reports, helps “internationalize” the Mindanao conflict and current issues, and, generally, serves as a support network for BC initiatives.

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Its 2003 mission reports have been compiled into a book, *Bantay Ceasefire 2003* that is used for lobby and campaigns. For the organizations involved, the network provided lessons in the value of partnerships and synergized efforts. The challenge now is to expand the network to other existing human rights bodies and regional organizations and establish stronger links with International Monitoring Teams from Malaysia, Brunei and other OIC countries.

In the meantime, the different sides in the conflict, people on the ground, and observers, agree the reason this grassroots-led organization has thus far managed to stave off the outbreak of hostilities is its proactive and participatory approach.

** Diomedes Eviota Jr. is research coordinator of the Davao-based Initiatives for International Dialogue (IID), which acts as the secretariat of the Bantay Ceasefire since its formation in 2003.*

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**Resources**

*Enlarging spaces and strengthening voices for peace: civil society initiatives in Mindanao.* By Carolyn O. Arguillas. ACCORD series. Online: www.c-r.org/accord/min

*SEACSN Bulletin* (January-March 2003).

**Note**

[1] This outreach program enabled BC field missions to secure participants from such bodies as the Penang-based Southeast Asian Conflict Studies Center; SUARAM (Suara Rakyat-Malaysia), a regional organization; Grupo Feto Foinsae Timor Lorosae (GFTTL) from East Timor; Palaung Women's Organization (Burma); the National Coalition for the Union of Burma; Aceh Institute for Social Political Studies; Suara Rakyat Acheh, and the Center for Security and Peace studies in Indonesia. It also attracted interns and volunteers from Mennonite Central Committee in the United States; Philippinenburo of Asienhaus and Arbeiten und Studien Aufenthalte (ASA) in Germany; and the Australian Volunteers International.