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People Building Peace II: Successful Stories of Civil Society

Edited by Paul van Tongeren, Malin Brenk, Marte Hellema, Juliette Verhoeven

Boulder: Lynne Rienner: June 2005

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## **Introduction**

*“Instead of continuing to weep in frustration we should pick up the phone, hear the voices, and continue onward with renewed hope, knowing that there’s someone to talk to, that the cycle of bloodshed can be brought to an end.”* (A user of Hello Peace)

*“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[...].”* (Michael L. Westmoreland-White about the Witness for Peace)

*“You ask me am I crazy for playing the cello, why do you not ask if they are crazy for shelling Sarajevo?”* (Vedran Smailovic, the cellist who, when twenty-two of his fellow

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citizens were killed in the early days of the siege of Sarajevo responded by taking his cello to the spot of the massacre and playing for the following twenty-two days in their honour. It was a gesture that inspired not only the people of Sarajevo, but the entire caring world.)

These are a few quotes from the several successful cases of civil society activities included in this publication. It comprises, in a few words, the message of the whole publication: that, in order to effectively prevent and resolve the violent conflicts of today, all stakeholders, from the grassroots to the international levels, need to be included in developing and implementing such strategies throughout the entire conflict cycle. Most importantly, peacebuilding from below- by civil society actors –works and is needed for any peace process to succeed. This is, by no means, a new revelation. However, while much literature is available on Track I negotiations, international military interventions, peacekeeping missions and even, more theoretically, on the need to include civil society in different parts of the peace process, there is still a gap in literature mirroring the successful contributions that civil society is already making in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. This publication wishes to fill this gap by showing that people on the ground, ranging from women, youth and faith-based organizations to artists and media, can make and already have made a positive difference in many of the conflict areas around the world. Civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations – CSOs and NGOs, as they are commonly described, - although not a substitute to Track I actors, should therefore be seen as a necessary and irreplaceable complement to the activities of governments and intergovernmental organizations in the field of conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

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### **Setting the Stage**

The “War on Terrorism” draws attention away from the reality in which we live today: of the thirty-four countries that are the furthest away from achieving the UN Millennium Development Goals, twenty-two are currently or were recently affected by conflict. The New World order, envisaged after the collapse of the Soviet Union, rapidly dissolved into a series of brutal civil wars in which thousands have been killed and millions more displaced. Driven by short-term pressures and lack of political will, many governments usually respond too late. The costs of squandered resources have been great and the scars of human misery will take generations to heal.

Nevertheless, there are currently thousands of individuals and organizations outside governments and intergovernmental organizations that are working for peace around the world. These people are achieving important results, but unfortunately, the work that they do is not often given the acknowledgement it deserves. Therefore, we believe that the time has come to raise the profile of the people who are working to achieve peace on the ground in conflict areas around the world.

### **The Need for Change**

The international community, as it is embodied by the UN, has too often proved ineffective when faced with the harshest realities of world conflicts. Given that the nature of conflicts has changed, shifting from interstate to intrastate, so must the strategies to solve them change. There has likewise been growing interest in civilian forms of conflict prevention and peacebuilding, even among governments and international organization. The UN Secretary-General has, for example, spoken of the need to shift from a Culture of Reaction to a Culture

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of Prevention and many other organizations, including the European Union and the

Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, have responded to the call.

Linked to this shift is the importance of civil society organizations. Although political leaders across the world are becoming increasingly aware of civil society's potential to anticipate and resolve its own tensions, the scope and magnitude of civil societies' activities in this field are still not fully recognized. Too often it seems that governments are reluctant to admit non-state actors to the business of peace and security.

Despite this reluctance, successful work in conflict prevention and peacebuilding by civil society is already taking place on the ground as community leaders, women's groups, academics, journalists and businessmen initiate and involve themselves in activities with results that have, at times, extend beyond that of soldiers and diplomats.

### **The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict**

In 2002, the European Centre for Conflict Prevention (ECCP) initiated a civil society process to generate a global agenda for the prevention of armed and violent conflicts, in response to the UN Secretary-General's 2001 *Report on the Prevention of Armed Conflict*.

The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) was formed to build a new international consensus on the prevention of violent conflict and peacebuilding and to support a shift from reaction to prevention. Fifteen regional processes comprise the fabric of the initiative and will develop separate action agendas to reflect principles and priorities for their regions. Building from these regional agendas, the Global Partnership will develop a Global Action Agenda and work towards a global civil society conference at UN headquarters in July 2005, and a long-term network of people and organizations committed to

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peacebuilding and conflict prevention. The publication currently in your hands is also one of the main outcomes of the Global Partnership and is based on the valuable input from organizations facilitating different regional branches of the Global Partnership and other lead organizations in this field.

### **Process and Challenges**

The idea of this book arose about three years ago, as the Global Partnership provided us with an excellent opportunity to publish a follow-up to the first People Building Peace publication entitled *People Building Peace: 35 Inspiring Stories from Around the World* (ECCP, 1999).

This book presented for the first time a broad overview of grassroots successes in this field from different countries and continents. The publication is still in great demand by NGOs, training institutes and other organizations whose work touches on conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

The worldwide scope of the Global Partnership provided an excellent opportunity to work with different grassroots organizations and to collect the local stories that had, in many cases, never previously been documented. Seizing this opportunity, this book project was discussed several times within the Global Partnership as well as with external experts.

The challenges we have faced during the process of developing this publication have been many. Once the idea was launched, we sent out initial requests to all of our regional partners in the Global Partnership as well as to lead organizations in this field asking for their stories. The responses were overwhelming and we had soon collected over 300 cases from all over the world. Our biggest challenge therefore became developing a selection process based on criteria such as regional spread, sustainability, innovation and a clear impact to end up with a

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more manageable number of cases. During this process it also became clear that, to fully raise the voices of these people working on the ground, we needed to provide them with the opportunity to write the cases themselves. Although the proposal was very well received by the organizations in question (about two-thirds chose to write the case themselves), this led to another main challenge. For the first time, many of the organizations involved were not only required to reflect on and objectively assess their own work but they likewise had to build the capacity within their own organizations to document their successful cases.

For the editors, this strategy also presented the tremendous challenge of working with over eighty authors in the very short time span that was dedicated to the publication process. There was also the challenge of balancing these unknown cases with better known, and often published, ones to show the great span of activities in which civil society is currently involved in this field.

Despite, and probably because of all these challenges, the publication process has been extremely interesting and rewarding.

### **This Publication**

This book aims to celebrate the work of individuals and organizations working for peace around the world by showcasing and promoting their inspiring and successful stories. The formula of this book is the same as its predecessor, *People Building Peace: 35 Inspiring Stories from Around the World*. The first part of the publication gives an overview of the current state of affairs, latest trends and developments in peacebuilding as well as ways forward in relation to civil society, the UN and other international organizations.

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The second part of the publication contains a series of chapters going more into depth by determining the roles of nine key groups of civil society actors and sectors and clearly formulating eight tools, approaches and strategies that these actors have at their disposal throughout the different phases of the conflict cycle.

Each chapter begins with a brief overview of the issue at stake, all of which were written by leading experts and practitioners from this field. Linked to each introduction are case studies of how people successfully can and have made a difference in the field of conflict prevention and peacebuilding. These cases are intended to raise the profile of people working for peace from different parts of civil society, in different regions, and on different levels. In several of these chapters, valuable contributions from more controversial civil society actors such as diaspora, faith-based leaders, and the media are highlighted. This is to show that, contrary to much of the current literature and discussions that most often focus on the negative role these groups can play in conflict situations, many of these civil society actors are engaged in extensive conflict prevention and peacebuilding activities seldom acknowledged inside and outside this field. By showing the “other side”, we hope to rectify that negative image.

Furthermore, we hope to stimulate more peacebuilders to work with these groups of powerful but often neglected individuals and sectors, to create a stronger “peace constituency” in different conflict areas.

Only if we involve all stakeholders will we be able to build sustainable peace bringing the cycle of bloodshed to an end. The stories in this publication show a variety of successful activities by civil society actors working towards this end. By bringing them to you in this easy accessible format we hope that you will enjoy reading this book as much as we have enjoyed making it.

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The editors

## **1. Weaving the Web: Civil Society Roles in Working with Conflict and Building Peace**

*Catherine Barnes\**

*Outsiders can never make peace for others; people and societies must create their own systems for working through their differences. While governments must play a crucial role in this process, the people are the key to long term conflict transformation – with outsiders potentially playing important supportive and enabling roles. Through the process of engaging with each other, people can determine how they will live with each other in the world they share and give consent to the process through which they agreed to be governed. This act of making and keeping agreements in all realms of life and the*

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*willingness to co-exist and engage peacefully and, occasionally, even joyfully is at the centre of the roles played by civil society in working with conflict.*

“Civil society” resists easy definition, especially when discussing it as a global development. Every society has its own distinct forms of social organization, cultural and political traditions, as well as contemporary state and economic structures – all of which are central to the development of civil society and shape its specific features. Most broadly understood, however, *civil society* refers to the web of social relations that exist in the space between the state, the market (activities with the aim of extracting profit), and the private life of families and individuals. Interlinked with the concept of “civil society” is the idea of *social capital*: the values, traditions and networks that enable coordination and cooperation between people. Therefore these concepts have qualities associated with relationships, with values, and with organizational forms.

Civil society takes form through various types of association. Ranging from officially constituted institutions to small, informal community groups, these associations give expression and direction to the social, political, spiritual and cultural needs of members. By reflecting diverse interests and values, they enable the articulation, mobilization and pursuit of the aspirations of the different constituent elements within a society. Figure 1 illustrates many – though not all – of the types of groupings that can potentially comprise civil society. Some would contest the inclusion of some of these groupings as a part of civil society, more narrowly defined. Yet all have played important roles in responding to conflict, as illustrated in this volume. What becomes clear is that civil society is far more than public benefit non-governmental organizations (NGOs). NGOs with technical-professional skills do, however, play an important role in providing services, promoting change and working with conflict.

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**<Insert Figure 1.1: Civil Society - Diverse Sectoral & Organizational Forms>**

As a concept, civil society rose to prominence globally during the 1990s. This was, in part, as a result of agendas articulated by international NGOs. It was also a response to initiatives of donor agencies that aspired to support the development of this independent space within societies in transition from various forms of authoritarian rule. Transnational and global civil society has developed powerfully over the past two decades, as is discussed further below.

Along with this has been a rapid expansion in CSOs explicitly aimed at working with conflict. This significance of civil society in general and its role in conflict in particular have been recognized by the United Nations in recent reports and resolutions.

There are significant variations in how theorists define civil society and view its functions.

Many incorporate a normative quality to their definition and view it as the space for cultivating 'civic' values and practices. It is also seen as the space for cultivating values of 'civility' in the 'public realm', in which power is mediated by constitutionalizing relations between different groups within society. In this view, civil society can be distinguished from patrimonialism: personalized power relations operating through alliances organized around patron / client relations that underpin of social, political and economic organization.

Some stress the *political* role of civil society, viewing it as the space for cultivating processes through which citizens engage in public life by channeling their interests and aspirations through peaceful deliberative processes.

Civil society interfaces with the state through parliamentary institutions (with parliamentarians often seen as serving a bridging role as the elected representatives of civil society); through various forms of policy dialogue; and even through direct displays of power through protest movements and activism. Furthermore, civil society groups can help to

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monitor and constrain the arbitrary exercise of state power and, increasingly, the behavior of private businesses and even multinational corporations. Therefore civil society enables different groupings in society to debate differences, reach compromise, form priorities, and – sometimes – develop consensus on a higher common purpose.

Civil society does not, however, replace the state. At its worst, an authoritarian government can constrict – or even crush – the functioning of civil society through methods that violate human rights. Yet it is difficult for civil society to thrive amidst lawlessness and widespread violence. A flourishing civil society typically depends upon the security and predictability provided by an effective, democratic state that is controlled by a government that ensures the rule of law and policies that respond to the needs of the population. If these conditions are not present, people – through civil society organizing – strive to create the elements of self-governance and security. In some cases, communities have striven to create these conditions amidst state failure, as has been seen in parts of Somalia. In so doing, people are recreating the basis for democratic government, which rests on the consent of the governed. Thus civil society and democratic states are highly complementary and even interdependent.

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### **Modalities for engagement between civil society organizations and governments**

CSOs responding to conflict need to deliberate and analyze the values and political positioning that characterizes their relationship with the state, so as to engage more effectively, ethically and strategically.

. Complicit – as citizens and as organizational groups embedded in a country's civil society, we are party to the decisions that our governments make in our name.

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. Contractual – when CSOs implement government policies and programs through their work, often by receiving funding from governments.

. Contributing – through participation in policy dialogue and recommendations for appropriate responses to specific situations or issues.

. Complementarity – working in parallel as separate / autonomous entities within the same system of issues and relationships.

. Contesting / Confronting – when CSOs challenge government actions, priorities, and behaviors.

(This framework was developed by the participants in the GPPAC London “Brainstorming” Meeting of 3 December 2003, with key inputs from Andy Carl and Simon Fisher.)

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### **Polarized Communities, the Challenge of “Uncivil” Society, and the Power of Dialogue**

Most people, most of the time, do not want to be a part of wide-scale violence. Many will, however, engage in or condone violence when they do not see alternatives or are so inflamed with a burning sense of injustice that violence is considered necessary as a remedy or for protection. In these cases, civil society actors can be central to the mobilization and escalation of war. Intellectuals, traditional authorities and religious leaders may provide the rationale and moral justification for violence; educational institutes and the media can shape perceptions of what is going on and advocate war as the answer; civic associations and political parties may mobilize their members for the war effort. Thus civil society groups can be a factor in war as well as a force for peace.

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A maximalist conception of civil society recognizes this plurality because it is a manifestation of the range of opinion, interests and values that exist within a society. In some contexts, there may be deep divisions within the society that are, in turn, reflected in and shaped by polarized CSOs. Some CSOs promote causes that are incompatible with internationally agreed norms and principles, such as those promoting exclusionary or other hate-based ideologies or those tolerating (or even endorsing) tactics based in violence or oppression. There are also dominant elements in society that may use various forms of coercive power – sometimes executed through state institutions – to maintain their privilege and promote their interests at the expense of other groups, of future generations or of the environment as a whole. While most would argue that armed groups are not a part of civil society *per se*, these groups are often supported by elements in civil society that champion the cause and view armed struggle as legitimate – further indicating the fuzzy lines around the ‘civility’ of some CSOs.

A diverse and thriving civil society is nevertheless one of the crucial underpinnings for strengthening the capacity of societies to manage conflict peacefully. This is particularly true when individuals are members of multiple groups, each of which addresses different aspects of their concerns – such as their communal identity, vocational interests and hobbies, social and political values, and neighborhood environment. These cross-cutting memberships across CSOs create ‘bridging social capital’: the dense networks that are a powerful force integrating society and minimizing the potential for polarization along any specific divide. Ultimately, the state belongs to its people; CSO engagement in addressing problems that could generate conflict strengthens long-term social and political development of the country. Civil society is a potentially powerful force that can mobilize either to escalate conflict or to

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facilitate its resolution. Governments that attempt to suppress the aspirations voiced through civil society tend to provoke a struggle to meet those needs through other means, including violent resistance. Any long-term strategy for prevention needs to be rooted in creating cultures of peace. In the meanwhile, it is important to engage antagonist civil society actors in dialogue processes capable of working through differences, developing common ground, and transforming perceptions distorted by fear, misunderstanding and hatred.

### **Engaging with Conflict and Preventing War**

The potential for conflict exists in all aspects of human social life. Most broadly understood, conflict occurs when two or more ‘parties’ (individuals or groups) have – or *perceive* that they have – incompatible goals and this perception of incompatibility shapes their attitudes and behaviors toward each other. Many people think of conflict as intrinsically negative. However, conflict typically emerges from real issues and seemingly contradictory interests, thus revealing underlying problems that need to be addressed to keep the system of relationships dynamic and strong. The way people respond to conflict makes the difference between it becoming a force for destruction or being a catalyst for constructive change. Sometimes people respond by seeking to avoid the problem or trying to suppress it. Sometimes people use aggression or even violence against those they see as creating the problem or blocking their goals. Yet it is also possible to engage with conflict through peaceful processes. This can help those involved to address the causes and to repair relationships that have been weakened by anger, fear and hatred; thereby helping to transform the situation that gave rise to the conflict.

Conflict is typically entwined with processes of change. Conflict can be embraced as a way of working proactively toward social change goals and is an intrinsic feature of the struggle

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for justice. Many activists have sought to surface conflict so that problems that are being suppressed or ignored can be put on the agenda and addressed. While this is sometimes done through armed movements and the use of violence, there is a long and well-developed tradition of peaceful protest, nonviolent direct action and other activism. This distinction points to the importance of channeling conflict through peaceful processes capable of delivering constructive change. Historically, civil society activism has been one of the most powerful resources for these processes, as famously demonstrated in the nonviolent movements led by Gandhi in ending colonial rule in South Asia or by Martin Luther King in the struggle against racism and for civil rights in the USA.

Thus many civil society organizations do not seek to prevent conflict *per se*; instead they aim to prevent war and deal with the consequences of violence. This is particularly important in an era when non-combatant civilians are increasingly the focus of war – with estimates of civilian deaths counting for approximately 75 percent of all casualties.<sup>1</sup> Forcible displacement and massacres; the targeting of women and children and abduction of children as soldiers; environmental destruction and economic collapse creating profound impoverishment; the legacies of crippling bitterness, fear and division. These are some of the many reasons why civil society actors are compelled to use their energy and creativity to find alternatives to violence, to end wars and prevent them from starting or reoccurring.

At its most comprehensive, prevention aims both to prevent and impede violent conflict *and* to build a just and sustainable peace by transforming underlying causes of conflict. The Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict developed this idea into the distinction between *structural prevention* (strategies to address root causes) and the *operational prevention* (strategies to impede the emergence, escalation and spread of violence). The UN Secretary-General in his 2001 *Report on the Prevention of Armed Conflict* subsequently

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adopted these concepts and they have become cornerstones of the framework for thinking about conflict prevention internationally.

### **Multiple Arenas for CSO Roles in Prevention and Peacebuilding**

In a globalizing world, preventing war and armed conflict and building sustainable peace requires strategies that address structural causes of conflict, many of which may be inherent in the global system. It also needs partnerships between civil society actors at the local, national, regional and global levels with governments, inter-governmental organizations (IGOs) and potentially businesses. In addressing this challenge, there seem to be three basic orientations that motivate civil society groups to work on conflict-related issues, as illustrated in Figure 1.2.

#### **< Insert Figure 1.2 Civil Society Orientations to Working on Conflict Issues >**

First, there are pre-existing civil society groups – such as women’s organizations or faith-based groups – that do not consider working on conflict as a part of their core focus but who feel compelled to respond to the challenge that conflict and war poses for their constituents. Their involvement may be motivated in part to ensure that their core concerns are addressed; they often highlight key issues that should be addressed in processes to address the conflict. For example, women’s organizations may aim to ensure that women’s needs are met and women are represented at the negotiating table. These sectoral CSOs often call upon others in their wider networks to extend solidarity, thus helping to mobilize resources and make a powerful contribution to raising awareness. Second, as described in the next subsection, there are CSOs that aim to address underlying structural problems that give rise to conflict in

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general through efforts aimed at policy reform and systems change, yet who are not directly focused on efforts to resolve or transform specific situations of conflict. Third, there are groups that are focused primarily on responding to specific conflict situations. Their role is the focus of the remainder of this chapter.

### **Global Civil Society: Addressing Systemic Causes of War and Conflict**

A global civil society is emerging with the growth of communications technology. There are many substantive reasons for its expansion: the failure of governments to respond effectively to global challenges, such as the environment; the growing concern for the situation of people elsewhere, as witnessed in the human rights movement; and feelings of solidarity in the face of common threats, such as concern about the implications of the concentration of power in transnational corporations. For many, it is a reaction to growing inequality of power and the increasing discrepancy between economics and governance, whereby the effects of increasingly interdependent markets are not counterbalanced by effective global regulatory mechanisms.

<box>

### **Globalization and Conflict: Challenges for Structural Prevention**

Many have observed that economic globalization simultaneously brings economic growth in some places while weakening economies and whole states in others. This process is coupled with growing social polarization between the 'haves and the have-nots'. The economic restructuring of the 1980s and 1990s was based on liberalization. International financial institutions prescribed structural adjustment in exchange for much needed loans to indebted

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countries, thereby opening domestic markets, ending government subsidies and other protection for domestic businesses, and reducing government spending, including on social spending. Liberalization has resulted in what the UNDP terms the “ascents / descents” pattern of development. In many cases, pre-existing inequalities have widened: those who were already strong in the marketplace have been able to accumulate proportionately more wealth; whereas those who were already economically vulnerable have experienced intensified exclusion. This is widely understood as a significant root cause of conflict. The likelihood that this conflict will be expressed in violent revolts is increased when peoples’ aspirations are frustrated because of this relative disparity and the government is seen as unresponsive or oppressive – rather than being triggered by the experience of grinding poverty.

Another factor contributing to the feasibility of armed insurgencies is that governments do not have full control over regulating cross-border economic interactions. The growing ‘shadow globalization’ of illicit trade gives increasingly lucrative incentives to criminal networks capable of transferring whatever goods can be profitably traded: from timber, to diamonds, to drugs, to weapons, to human beings. This provides the channels through which ‘war economies’ operate – thus helping to both sustain the resources needed by fighting groups (whether state or non-state actors) and providing the incentives that motivate some to engage in armed conflict. This is achieved by linking local resources to global networks and otherwise exploiting the adaptive power of networks made possible through globalization.

**<end of box>**

The ability of non-state actors to set a compelling agenda – particularly on environmental, social and, to a lesser extent, economic and security issues – has been a significant force in shaping global responses to key structural problems. Some have remarked that public opinion

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has become “the second superpower”. Although CSOs do not have the legal, political or military power of states, they have the power to persuade, to propose solutions rooted in their analysis of the problems and to influence by example and by the integrity of their moral voice. Governments and corporations are more likely to listen when they perceive that CSOs have the support of large numbers of people who want change.

Global civil society has played a key role in mobilizing campaigns aimed at policy change.

The important roles played by civil society groups and the citizens they mobilized in support of the Climate Convention, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, the movement for the International Criminal Court, to raise awareness of HIV/AIDS, and to reduce the debt burden are a few examples of successful CSO campaigning initiatives. Some of the campaigns have specifically targeted factors that enable armed conflict, such as the effort to ban the trade of conflict diamonds that funded militias and ongoing efforts to regulate the trade of small arms and light weapons. In addition to campaigns targeting specific policy matters, there are global protest movements to address the issues raised by economic globalization and the challenges raised in the wake of 9/11, such as the global peace movement’s mass mobilization in 2003 against the war in Iraq.

In addition to analyzing the economic and institutional structures that generate conflict and policy responses to change them, there is a need to transform deeply embedded attitudes and patterns of relationships between groups of people that give rise to violence. Countless CSOs throughout the world – independently or together with governments and inter-governmental organizations – work toward creating the longer-term foundations for sustainable peace. This includes a focus on: peace education and conflict resolution life-skills; demilitarization;

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gender equality; fulfillment of human rights; promoting equitable and sustainable

development, as well as human and environmental security.

Given the significance of transnational civil society as a force for change, it is perhaps not surprising that problems have arisen. There are often imbalances between those in the 'centre' and those on the 'periphery' of access to resources and power. This dynamic plays out in terms of who is able to determine the agenda for change and whose voices are heard in decision-making and social change initiatives. Within some international NGO coalitions, there is a tendency for the Northern / Western partners to assume a dominant voice and thus set agendas that respond to their perceptions of problems in ways that might not reflect the views and goals of Southern / Eastern partners. Some have also critiqued the ways in which these initiatives have imposed demands on governments in the South and the East – such as through advocating aid conditionality and sanctions. They are troubled that externally imposed prescriptions on national policy undermine democratic processes by making the government more accountable to external forces – especially international financial institutions and powerful foreign governments – than to the domestic population.

### **Roles of CSOs in Responding to Specific Conflicts and Wars**

The UN Secretary-General has made it clear that the primary responsibility for responding to conflict rests with local actors. CSOs rooted in conflict-affected communities are crucial to this equation. While they often work in partnership with civil society actors from other parts of the world, who help to support their efforts, the most crucial efforts are made by those within the societies concerned. Civil society groups bring a number of important qualities for responding to specific cases of conflict. In general:

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. Their independence – and, in some cases, the unique status they hold because of their perceived expertise, integrity or moral authority – enables them the freedom to act swiftly and flexibly.

. CSOs often rely on innovative, creative and non-coercive strategies to persuade people to engage in peaceful processes based on dialogue and deliberation to address problems and reconcile relationships.

. CSOs can act when – for various reasons – official actors are immobilized (often related to mandates, lack of political will or the implications conveyed by their official status). This can include the capacity to talk to those in militant movements in order to clarify conflict issues and explore opportunities for entry into negotiation processes.

. CSOs can improve communication and relationships by fostering interaction across conflict divides through informal exchanges and joint projects. While they can facilitate dialogue between the protagonists in armed struggle, CSO-led processes are often focused on helping ordinary people to articulate what they really need and then helping to find a common ground from which they can work to establish peaceful co-existence.

. By mobilizing ‘people power’, CSOs can put pressure on decision-makers to reach a peaceful settlement. They can push for policies and practices designed to address root causes of conflict.

. CSOs can bear witness to violations in powerful ways that undermine the moral authority and legitimacy of abusers, sometimes stimulating conditions that lead to the collapse of regimes over the long term. They can routinely monitor events and generate attention when violations occur or agreements are unfulfilled.

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These qualities and others are deployed in countless ways that are appropriate to the context at different stages in the development of a conflict. There are barriers that must be overcome to play these roles effectively. How can the range of actors in a society feel that they have the capacity to make a difference and play an effective role in shifting the emerging conflict dynamics – especially if they are themselves mobilized / polarized along conflict divides? What is the basis of their influence? How do they access decision-makers? How do they engage with the wider population to mobilize people not only to stop the violence but also to create a better society?

### **CSO Involvement in Structural Prevention and Responding to Conflict**

In much the same way as transnational civil society efforts seek to address key challenges within the global system, CSOs in a particular country are often at the forefront of addressing problems in their own society. Many aim to address sources of structural violence and to promote human security through initiatives for social and economic development, human rights monitoring, promoting the rule of law, and preventing environmental degradation, among other challenges. Through participation in political processes, policy dialogue, monitoring, advocacy campaigns, and protests they help to make governments and state structures more responsive to the needs of their citizens.

CSOs can also play important roles in helping to alleviate social tensions and conflict. They work both to challenge racism, xenophobia and discrimination and to promote tolerance and a culture of peace. Person-focused methodologies – such as prejudice reduction workshops and interfaith dialogue – can complement efforts to address discrimination through policy reform and structural change. Often these initiatives are focused on youth, who may have greater

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capacities for change than older generations. Summer camps, integrated schools, and exchange programs can all promote what has become known as ‘next generation work’.

In many parts of the world, there are efforts to strengthen local capacities to mediate conflict and manage differences through conflict resolution training, mediation services, and dialogue facilitation. For example, the Kyrgyz Republic-based NGO Foundation for Tolerance International has trained and supported community mediators in villages in the often volatile Ferghana Valley, where there are frequently disputes over water rights and economic resources that can become the spark escalating wider tensions. By focusing on the local dimension of conflict, these mediators can help to provide alternatives to violence.

### **CSO Roles in Addressing the Escalation of Violence and Emergence of War**

Civil society actors do not need to be the passive bystanders in situations of emerging and ongoing conflict. Their roles in delivering humanitarian aid and other services aimed at relieving suffering are well known. However, when sufficiently empowered, CSOs can help change the conflict dynamics, as well as to address its consequences. This is often most effectively achieved through partnerships with others, including IGOs, governments, and international CSOs.

*. Early warning of emerging crises through monitoring, analysis, and communication strategies to raise awareness and generate attention.* International human rights organizations, such as Amnesty International, have played this role notably for decades and have been joined by others, such as International Crisis Group. The knowledge of local people is especially valuable. They are aware of events as they are unfolding and are acutely

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sensitive to signs of preparations for war. Too often, however, they have no mechanisms to effectively inform the world and their knowledge is not factored into decision-making processes of international organizations with responsibility for peace and security. In West Africa, however, a new partnership has been evolving between the West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) – which has local CSO members throughout the region – the regional organization ECOWAS and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, who have signed a memorandum of understanding to develop a joined-up early warning system for the region.

. *Mobilizing political will, developing options and strategies for response.* Civil society groups can analyze the situation, formulate recommendations, and engage in policy dialogue to address conflicts. They have to be skilful to ensure that their voices are heard. This can be done through coordinated lobbying and raising awareness among domestic and international audiences. Much more can be done to strengthen civil society capacities in this area by fostering networks to mobilize rapid responses. Yet there are cases where it has been done on an *ad hoc* basis – such as when a global coalition of CSOs mobilized in 1999 to focus international attention on the violence in East Timor and helped to ensure that an international protection force was deployed to uphold the results of the referendum on independence.

. *Developing and strengthening constituencies for peace.* Those involved in armed conflict often justify their actions by claiming to represent popular causes or on the basis of their authority as governments. Civil society actors committed to exclusively peaceful means often challenge this by demonstrating that public opinion rejects military approaches. Through

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raising public awareness and education about alternatives, they generate public support.

Some of the effective methods for creating a new atmosphere stem from peace media, art projects, concerts, and other creative ways of reaching out to the wider public. Sometimes efforts involve mass protests at the use of military force or demonstrations in favor of peace processes. Either way, they can reveal that there are significant constituencies for peace, which can be a persuasive force in altering the responses of governments and armed groups.

*. Facilitating communication, generating alternatives and building relationships.*

Transforming the relationship between adversaries is often necessary before a lasting cooperative relationship on functional issues can be established. While this most often is a long-term and complex process, one of the common methodologies for fostering this change is through dialogue-based processes. Activities through which dialogue can occur include: trainings, exchanges, problem-solving workshops, and peace commissions. Often they involve some element of joint analysis, in which members of groups in conflict discuss the causes and dynamics of conflict – seeking to understand the other’s perspectives – and explore potential ways of addressing it. These kinds of methods can be designed as one-off events. Increasingly common, however, is the recognition that dialogue forums and processes may need to be sustained as a longer-term process.

*. Violence reduction, peace monitors and zones of peace.* It is very difficult for people to build peace when they feel threatened or under attack. Those who want to wreck a peace process tend to escalate violence targeted against civilians. Conventional state security forces have an important role in protection; yet too often they are a part of the problem. To address these problems, numerous communities created peace monitors to act as witnesses and

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mediators. For example, in South Africa, the National Peace Accord provided the architecture of structures for people's involvement in violence prevention. Thousands of peace committees were formed to mediate disputes and monitor demonstrations and other activities that might degenerate into violence. The committees coordinated their work with the political parties and with the security forces and held them accountable for their actions. In a context where civilian populations are frequently massacred, some communities – including many in Colombia and the Philippines – have responded to violence by negotiations with armed forces to declare their communities as neutral, demilitarized “zones of peace”.

### **Civil Society Roles in Peacemaking and Political Negotiations**

Peace processes – and especially the political negotiations to reach peace agreements – are a unique opportunity for creating the bridge to lasting social and political change. They offer opportunities to create an agreed road map towards the future by addressing the underlying issues generating conflict, developing new ‘rules of the game’, and transforming relationships among antagonists. Those who participate in negotiations can determine the substantive and procedural agreements that can lead to structural changes in the state and governance system, human rights, security and development policies. Therefore, it matters how the process is structured and who gets to participate in it.

. *Developing a vision for the future.* It is often remarked that “unless you know where you want to go, it is unlikely that you will get there”. Sustainable peace processes need to be about more than finding ways to end the fighting, they also need to start societies on the path towards a more equitable and peaceful future. To do this, it is important to engage in public deliberation about what kind of society they want to create. Looking back on sustained peace

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processes, it is possible to identify moments where public visioning was facilitated by large-scale public initiatives. In the early 1950s, a Congress of the People was held in South Africa. First, ordinary citizens in thousands of community meetings across the country were asked the open-ended question: “What needs to change in South Africa for you to enjoy full and abundant lives in terms of country, community and individual?” Then the congress of delegates chosen by their community drafted the Freedom Charter to articulate not just what they opposed but also what they stood for. It shaped the development of political thinking, formed the foundations for a pro-democracy movement and influenced the negotiations in the 1990s.

. *Track II dialogue.* Using their unofficial and low-key status, CSOs can facilitate dialogue involving those close to government leaders and armed opposition groups. These processes often involve participants connected with the political negotiations and / or who can effect change at the grassroots level and support social reconciliation. It often takes time before the ideas, relationships, and personal changes that develop through these processes manifest into significant social and political change. Yet key figures from processes as diverse as Guatemala, Northern Ireland, South Africa, Tajikistan and Sri Lanka, all look back on their experience in Track II dialogue and in conflict resolution training workshops and claim it to be a turning point in how they perceived the conflict. It helped them to develop ideas for how to address the conflict issues and to develop constructive working relationships with counterparts previously perceived as enemies. Often these experiences occurred prior to a sustained political negotiation process and were a significant factor in why negotiators could engage constructively in talks once conditions became ripe.

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. *Creating a 'pragmatic peace' at the local level.* Peacemaking goes far beyond reaching a political agreement between the main parties; often it is necessary to make peace between those who live side-by-side and have nowhere else to go. Even when national level peace processes are stalled or non-existent, local communities can act to address the issues that generate conflict and escalate violence locally. In northern Mali, negotiations to end a secessionist insurgency and the transition to democratic governance had created the context for peace but did not secure it. However a series of self-led community meetings were held to build consensus on how to tackle issues that were within their capacity to address. They addressed many of the factors that were generating conflict and created a united front against those who used violence to promote their cause or position. Once the peace process was fostered at the very local level, the broad popular consensus secured the transition to sustainable peace.

. Shaping the negotiating agenda to ensure it addresses root causes and participating in the negotiations process, directly or indirectly. There are a number of processes, including Guatemala, Northern Ireland and South Africa, where civil society activists have asserted the right of the wider public to participate in the negotiated processes to shape their country's future. In so doing, they were able to influence the shape of the process, the negotiating agenda of issues addressed, the substantive agreements reached and their implementation. In most cases they brought the talks process further into the public sphere, enabling a wider range of people to contribute suggestions and follow the negotiations – including women and those from marginalized groups. With greater transparency, the public was better able to understand and potentially accept the reasons for the compromises reached. Furthermore, the

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processes marked a historic moment of change in each country and helped to establish the value of public debate and democratic processes as the legitimate response to conflict.

### **Consolidating Peace and Preventing Reoccurrence of War**

Peace processes are typically unfinished and imperfect. Conflicts are not transformed by agreements alone; they also need a commitment to address ongoing problems through political means. A sense of public ownership of the process becomes crucial at this stage. If the public and organized civil society have been excluded from the process or believe that it has not addressed their real needs, they are less likely to work actively towards its implementation. Without a broad public constituency in support, there are few safeguards against those who want to derail the agreement.

Civil society can play important roles in raising awareness and educating the public about the agreement itself. They can also be crucial for consolidating support. In Northern Ireland, the public was asked to vote on whether to accept the agreement. It was assumed that this would basically be a procedure for rubber stamping the agreement – after all, if the competing political parties agreed, would not the public as well? Yet it was soon apparent that a huge chasm had opened between those who drafted the agreement and the population as a whole. Non-partisan peace activists responded by organizing a “Yes” campaign. Within six weeks, the majority of the population voted in favor of it. In so doing, they gave a massive impetus for political compromise, which has helped to sustain the process through many years of difficulty.

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Yet agreements on paper mean very little if people are still suffering from the consequences of war and if the inequities that gave rise to it are left unaddressed. This is where sustained financial, technical, political support is crucial. Appropriate international aid, combined with determined government efforts are needed to facilitate the rehabilitation of war-affected communities and help ensure that everyone experiences a peace dividend. This can be strengthened through the involvement of local and international CSOs in policy analysis as well as program implementation and service delivery.

Furthermore, this is a time when CSOs need to resume efforts to ensure structural prevention– encouraging good governance, reconstruction and development, mediating social conflict, promoting human rights and other efforts to build a culture of peace. CSOs can play an especially important role in addressing the challenges of fostering transitional justice processes and enabling the potential for long-term reconciliation.

### **The Limits of Involvement**

The previous sections have concentrated on exploring the many contributions that civil society can make to transforming conflict. Yet it is rarely possible for CSO initiatives to be able to achieve peace on their own. Governments and other political actors – especially those who make decisions over the deployment of military force – are often decisive. Inter-governmental and multilateral organizations also have tremendous political, technical and other resources they can bring to processes of working with conflict. CSOs often have limits in the scope of the conflict dynamics they can address.

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. Few are able to effectively deal with the *political economy of war* – i.e., the greed that leads armed forces to have a stake in keeping the war going – although there are promising global campaigns that are trying to address these factors systemically.

. Many CSO initiatives are *depoliticized* and, in their efforts to restore peaceful interaction between people, fail to link issues of justice, human rights and equity that often drive the conflict. They may also fail to address the very real dynamics of political power that sustain conflicts as a tug-of-war for dominance.

. CSOs start *initiatives that are beyond their skills and capacities*. They may make the situation worse by escalating danger, exacerbating divisions and tensions, and / or through reinforcing prejudice. They may not be able to sustain initiatives that have been started, leading to missed opportunities and / or disempowering cynicism because raised expectations are dashed.

. Too often, CSO *initiatives are too small and too isolated* to make the kind of difference that is needed in these urgent life-or-death conditions. They may also divert attention away from the most urgent or strategically important concerns. There is a need to be more strategic, with better coordination for long-term change through processes that are aimed at outcomes, as well as on the integrity of the process itself.

. Sometimes the *legitimacy of CSO initiatives* are questioned, especially when it is unclear to whom they are accountable and what they are trying to achieve. Sometimes they are criticized for being insufficiently linked to real constituencies and responding to their concerns. In other times, suspicions are aroused by insufficiently transparent communication about what they are doing and why. Even though this may be more due to misunderstanding than malfeasance, it can undermine confidence and generate suspicion in fragile political environments.

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There are also challenges concerning how CSOs work among themselves.

. While effective partnerships can be a powerful resource for peace, too often there are *destructive dynamics in 'insider' and 'outsider' relationships*. Local civil society peacebuilders rooted within conflict-affected communities can find their efforts displaced or undermined by outsiders (whether NGOs, inter-governmental organizations, or donor agencies) who implicitly or explicitly impose their own agendas and values, introduce inappropriate initiatives and potentially further entrench conflict through an insufficiently nuanced understanding of the situation and opportunities to make change.

. Too often, CSOs fail to communicate amongst themselves and may even compete for the scarce resources available to undertake their initiatives. This can lead to a *lack of coordination and coherence* so that, instead of building momentum for peace, efforts are dispersed and potentially less effective.

### **Towards Partnerships for Peace**

While it is rare for grassroots efforts to transform wider systems of conflict and war, it is also not possible for these wider systems to be transformed without stimulating changes at the community level. Therefore many analysts and practitioners agree with John Paul Lederach's observation that there is a need to build peace from the bottom-up, the top-down and the middle-out. Yet the methodologies for crossing the scale barrier, simultaneously and in a coordinated manner, are not well developed. Therefore the key seems to be in negotiating dynamic and strategic partnerships.

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Primary responsibility for conflict prevention rests with national governments and other local actors. Greater ownership is likely to result in a more legitimate process and sustainable outcomes. The primary role of outsiders is to create spaces and support inclusive processes that enable those directly involved to make decisions about the specific arrangements for addressing the causes of conflict. Outsiders should help to build on the capacities that exist and avoid actions that displace and undermine homegrown initiatives or that promote short-term objectives at the expense of long-term prevention. Based on a collaborative understanding of the sources of conflict and the factors that continue to generate it, people based elsewhere can seek to address some of the causes that located elsewhere in the conflict system (such as arms suppliers in third countries or policies promoted by foreign governments that further escalate war).

Partnerships for peace may be the antidote to systems and networks sustaining war. Yet to achieve this potential, we need to acknowledge the legitimacy of CSOs in peace and security matters and to strengthen official recognition of their roles in the conflict prevention partnership. This can then be operationalized through stronger mechanisms and resources for interaction between IGOs, CSOs and governments in order to institutionalize the capacity for prevention.

It is likely, however, that efforts to shift to a culture of peace and to prioritize prevention over crisis management will be sustained only when there is widespread awareness amongst the general publics around the world that common security cannot be obtained through the barrel of a gun; instead, we can best work towards sustainable peace through collective efforts at meeting basic human needs and strengthening systems for managing differences peacefully.

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<personal story>

### **A Vital Force**

#### **H.E. Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão, President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste**

When reflecting on the theme of civil society's role in conflict prevention and peace building, I am again reminded that the struggle for Timor-Leste's right to self-determination and independence was also fought by various components of civil society both inside and outside of the country.

During our struggle, the role of the Catholic Church in Timor-Leste was critical in providing a voice and a sanctuary for the many victims of the brutal military occupation. The clandestine network, consisting of students, lay people, public servants, women, teachers and youths, was the backbone of the resistance.

On the international scene, Timor-Leste at one stage had the largest worldwide solidarity movement, advocating for an end to the violence and for peace in the territory. These bands of dedicated, ordinary citizens of the world united their efforts to pressure their respective governments in support of an independent Timor-Leste.

Five years have gone by since the historical referendum in August 1999, and two years since independence was officially declared. Timor-Leste has gone through three critical phases in the space of five short years: emergency humanitarian period, transitional period and now reconstruction and development.

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In each of these phases, the role of civil society can never be under-estimated. And in each of these phases, the crying need to build peace and prevent further conflict was foremost in the mind of every Timorese.

It is the desire of every Timorese to live in peace and to never again experience the pain and destruction that war brings. Indeed, it is only in situations of war that we feel the need for peace, for a tranquility of spirit.

During our 24 year-long difficult struggle, we learned to love peace and dialogue.

Peace, reconciliation, understanding and harmony between citizens are fundamental conditions for political stability and economic and social progress in our country.

Without stability and peace, there would not be democracy; there would not be progress.

Reconciliation has peace as its fundamental objective. Reconciliation entails breaking away with the environment of conflict.

The Timorese leadership, then under the umbrella organization, CNRT (National Council for Timorese Resistance), of which I was president, recognized from the very beginning that reconciliation was a fundamental need for a future independent Timor-Leste, to build peace in our society and thus avoid further conflict. Therefore, maximum attention was afforded to this process.

But reconciliation is more than just forgiving and moving away from the past. Reconciliation is a long process, demanding from each and every Timorese, the courage to admit our mistakes and to forgive. Reconciliation between ourselves and with our former enemies is instrumental in consolidating the peace that we Timorese fought so long and hard to achieve.

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Very early on, I defended that no-one should hold bitterness towards their enemies; they too, were merely instruments of a system, which oppressed them as it did us.

A few years ago, not long after we achieved our freedom, I was touring around the country visiting all the villages as part of the promise I made upon my return to Timor-Leste.

Everywhere was destruction; everywhere the cries and pain of the victims could be heard.

Village after village – men, women and children gathered together and told me their stories.

On one particular, exhausting night, where I was overwhelmed with the grief the many widows; all demanding justice for their suffering, an old man approached me and asked if he could speak. He stood before his fellow villagers and in a clear, steady voice, devoid of any emotion, he raised his badly twisted arms and declared

*“If putting my tormentor in jail means regaining the use of my hands, then I demand justice, here and now. But what use is there in seeking justice if it will not make any difference to my life?”*

This poor, simple villager expressed the heart of the policy that the Timorese leadership had been advocating all along - that there could be no real everlasting peace, without reconciliation. And that our independence would mean nothing if we could not bring peace and tranquility to the daily lives of our people; if we could not promise them a future free of further conflict.

But the government alone could not transmit this policy into action on the ground. It needed the support of civil society.

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It is the policy of the Timorese State to pursue the avenue of reconciliation and dialogue both in the domestic and international scene. With every effort made at the highest level, a complimentary one was made on the ground.

As President of the Republic, I am continuing this policy through two critical programs:

Open Presidency and National Dialogue.

Open Presidency is where the president comes to the people, and listens to their concerns and provides information where possible. Its objective is to reduce tension, through the exchange of information on the current processes and difficulties the people are facing. It is a preventative measure of conflict.

National Dialogue is another means of conflict prevention as it provides a forum for bringing issues of national interest to public debate. It brings conflicting parties together and gathers feedback from the general public.

Both programs are conducted with the invaluable support of civil society groups.

The goodwill talks between the governments of Timor-Leste and Indonesia have been complimented on the ground with traditional methods of post-conflict resolution such as public confession and apology, led by civil society. A Commission on Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR) was established to provide a platform for addressing past wrongs. CAVR, consisting of members of all segments of civil society, has conducted community based reconciliation nationwide and as a result, has succeeded in enabling ex-militias to reintegrate into their communities and for the most part, for those communities to continue with life in the normal way. Alongside these local dispute resolution initiatives is the need for national healing. Many Timorese want answers from those who caused their loss and

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suffering. With answers people can start the healing process and close the horrible chapter in their lives and finally be able to live in tranquility and with peace of mind.

As with its current role in peacebuilding, civil society will continue to be an important actor in ensuring peace and stability in Timorese society. Civil society should continue to play a role in helping to strengthen the democratic institutions, in helping the Timorese state lay the foundations of the rule of law, in helping to meet the social needs of the people. Civil society can be a vital force to check and balance the actions of the government by denouncing corruption, lack of transparency and other acts contrary to the interest of the people, to ensure that they are in line with the universal values and principles of freedom, democracy and prosperity.

<end personal story>

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## **2. Discourses on Peace Practices: Learning to Change by Learning from Change?1**

*Cordula Reimann and Norbert Ropers\**

*"Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?"*

*"That depends a good deal on where you want to get to"*<sup>2</sup>

*One of the favorite topics in the second half of the 1990s was to reflect about the importance of non-government organizations (NGOs) for active participation in the area of conflict prevention and transformation. Comparative advantages and shortcomings were listed and it was argued that a new "culture of peace" should be established, including a broad based alliance of government actors, international organizations, NGOs and other civil society organizations (CSOs). Critics responded by questioning the weight and political legitimacy of CSOs by outlining the darker sides of the expanding "humanitarian interventionism" of the 1990s.*

*One decade later the involvement of CSOs in the field of conflict prevention and transformation is no longer a matter for principled discussion. Now the attention is on how to assess and improve the quality of the work, how to enhance the internal networking as well as the cooperation with other actors. There is a widespread impression that the sum of CSO-activities on conflict prevention and transformation has left the pioneer phase and has started to consolidate itself as a field of its own.*

How far the field of conflict prevention and transformation has moved from the pioneer phase to a phase of consolidation is dependent on the criteria used. At least three benchmarks are

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regularly mentioned in this respect: (1) the quantitative and qualitative impressive *growth* of civil society organizations active in this field, (2) the *mainstreaming* of conflict prevention and conflict sensitivity into the work of donor agencies, government institutions and international NGOs as well as (3) the establishment of associations formulating and representing common interests of CSOs involved in this field (which could be defined as “trade organizations”).

The growth rate is impressive, but it reflects such a diversity of actors that it is difficult to assess how far its multiplication can also be interpreted as an indication of the ideas of conflict prevention and transformation taking root within the respective societies. Efforts of mainstreaming might be more revealing, but they are not necessarily linked to the involvement of CSOs. In many cases it just means the creation of special administrative units or procedures for handling conflict-related topics within existing governmental or intergovernmental agencies. If and how far this also leads to a more pro-active involvement of CSOs is an open question (see below the important difference between CSOs working on the *input* or *output* side of political decisionmaking).

The most interesting indicators might therefore be the activities of “trade organizations” and other initiatives to reflect on the state-of-the-art in and perspectives for the field of conflict prevention and transformation. This is also the reason why we, as authors, have chosen the concept of “discourses on peace practice”. It helps us to describe the status of the field of conflict prevention and transformation with respect to the involvement of CSOs.

This *discourse* approach is informed by the idea that social actors co-constitute the social reality through engaging in discussions about the meaning of activities, interactions, ideas and perceptions. Through participating in such discourses the actors are not only contributing to an intellectual exercise, they are also starting to co-constitute a kind of “collective

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identity". This is what we mean when using the term *we* for the collective of practitioners, scholars, activists, trainers, consultants etc. involved in conflict prevention and transformation, particularly from the perspective of CSOs. The introspection into the state of *our* field then becomes a question of who participates in which discourses, and what the insights and implications are from these discourses.

Obviously it is not possible to elaborate all relevant discourses here in which peace practitioners and scholars are currently involved in. Therefore we would like to concentrate on those that predominantly shape its overall development. The first observation in comparison to the state of the field 10-15 years ago in this respect is that the very legitimacy and rationale of conflict prevention and transformation with the help of CSOs is no longer an issue. The discourses today are rather on questions of how to enhance the quality, efficiency and impact of this type of peace work. Yet, there are also some issues which have accompanied and will continue to accompany the field because they are part of the complex political agenda of dealing with contradictory and dynamic violent conflicts.

In detail we would like to differentiate between three clusters of discourses on peace practices:

- . discourses on social change and justice,
- . discourses on cooperation and networking, and
- . professionalization discourses.

They are closely intertwined and together constitute the emerging framework of conflict prevention and transformation (**see diagram**).

< **Insert Diagram 2.1 Discourses on Peace Practices** >

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The guiding questions throughout the article will be:

. How far and why has conflict prevention and transformation as a field learned to change, grow and mature?

. What are the remaining analytical and political obstacles and challenges in conflict prevention and transformation?

### **Discourses on Social Change and Justice**

One of the roots and driving forces within the peace practice field is the movement to overcome the destructive mode of violence and war to address conflicts. In this respect the field is closely related to the secular project of the “civilization of conflict” and to the vision of *Si vis pacem, para pacem* (“If you want peace, prepare for peace”) instead of *Si vis pacem, para bellum* (“If you want peace, prepare for war”) (see Senghaas, 2004). With the “mainstreaming” of conflict prevention and transformation into the mainstream of the international “Realpolitik”, this normative dimension was somewhat marginalized. One concrete expression of this organizational development was when in the 1990s the traditional peace movement and pacifist discourses were taken over by newly established conflict resolution organizations like International Alert, Saferworld and the International Crisis Group.

This situation has dramatically changed since 9/11 and the subsequent international “War on Terrorism”. This campaign of the Bush Jr. Administration seems to have united a heterogeneous and diverse field of peacebuilding and development actors: it has not only united them in their reservation if not outright rejection of the fast growing re-militarization of US foreign policy and the *misuse* of development and humanitarian aid on the grounds of

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*anti-terrorism*. It has also led to a re-vitalization of the normative references to their non-coercive peacebuilding work as the only acceptable and *successful* alternative to long-lasting peace processes and structures.

The net outcome is a highly diverse field of peace practice in which principled approaches to non-violent conflict prevention and transformation do co-exist with pragmatic strategies of making best use of a *mix* of measures and instruments. What is clearly underdeveloped in this situation are endeavors to explore and discuss in detail how far these approaches are complementary or mutually incompatible with each other. This is also a lacuna for many CSO-activities on the macro-political level: should they, and in which way can they, play a constructive role within the often Machiavellian political power struggles to prevent or end wars and to negotiate peace agreements? A similar lacuna also exists with respect to the interaction between CSOs working on the basis of different mandates (e.g. as advocacy and movement CSOs or as service providing CSOs) and in different realms (e.g. in conflict transformation, security studies, human rights or development).

Another area of discourse centers on the interface and interaction between activities promoting relationship-building, empathy, trust and confidence on the one hand and those promoting the publication of and accountability for human rights violations, good governance and pluralism on the other hand. More recently this field of tension has been discussed under “transformative approaches versus conditionality”. The conditionality approach makes the safeguarding of individual human rights and pluralism a fundamental precondition for peace processes. Yet, the transformative approach does not make their safeguarding the prime condition, but considers the most effective way of promoting human rights to engage with all actors in a critical-constructive process of dialoguing and capacity-building.

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This tension is a fascinating re-vitalization of the 1970s and 1980s debate on the policy in the West vis-à-vis the Soviet Union and her allies, that between the followers of the “change through rapprochement” approach and those arguing for the “no concessions without civic rights improvements” approach.

The fundamental question behind many of these debates about the best way to achieve conflict prevention and transformation is: what are the underlying theories of social change? Most actors involved in conflict prevention and transformation, work with rather implicit theories of social change and justice. Largely unstated and hidden visions of social change and justice guide the practice of conflict prevention and conflict transformation. The evidence put forward by the Reflecting on Peace Practice project (Anderson, 2003) highlights that most organizations still lack a clear and solid understanding of their “peace vision” for the country they are working in/on, as well as of the causal assumptions that could lead towards the realization of this peace vision. The implication is that it is difficult to make any statement about the macro-political impact of those programs and projects apart from assessing their concrete output and outcome (number and profile of participants, mode of interaction, etc.).

This debate, sometimes described as the “theory-gap discourse”, arises from time to time, most recently in the Reflecting on Peace Practice project and in the Utstein Study, a comparative evaluation study of a group of bilateral donors (Smith, 2003). It is still an open question, whether their conclusions will lead to a stronger overall strategizing in this field (see below the professionalization discourse).

The theory gap discourse seems dispersed and lost its analytical urgency and focus. Instead, one can observe the emergence of discourses on single-focused aspects of conflict prevention and transformation, like on a highly elaborated body of research and reflection on

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reconciliation and transitional justice with highly normative questions being at the center of much of the debate.

One area in which the theory-gap was successfully reduced is the one dealing with the causes of conflict. This was particularly due to the debate on whether “greed or grievance” is the more convincing explanations for the outbreak and endurance of internal conflicts (Berdal & Malone, 2000). The result was that each conflict has its own *biography* and will comprise a different combination of psychosocial and political grievances as well as of socioeconomic factors. One of the professional standards in the field after this debate is the need for having a sound conflict analysis before any strategy for intervention is elaborated.

### **Discourses on Cooperation and Networking**

One of the key discourses at the beginning of the emergence of CSOs specialized on conflict prevention and transformation centered on the existence of several tracks of engaging parties into dialogues, problem solving workshops, capacity building projects and joint peace processes. The “multi-track” idea was probably the single most successful concept to create a legitimate space for the work of CSOs particularly in the framework of ethno-political conflicts. Furthermore it has also inspired the need for differentiating the conflict issues as well as the transformation process, leading to multi-issue and multi-phase conceptualizations. More challenging were the discussions on how to link the various tracks with each other and to design and organize a mutually supportive division of labor between different tracks in “peace constituencies”.

In the meantime the discussion has further elaborated these challenges. The two most debated issues are now, firstly, the interaction and cooperation between different groups of actors

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(independent from their belonging to the same or different tracks), and secondly, the creation of frameworks for integrating the contribution of different actors.

The classical dimension of cooperation relates to the one between the realm of states including international organizations and the realm of civil society. One of the observations that have been made here is that the capacity of both sides to contribute successfully to conflict prevention and transformation is to an impressive level dependent on each other. Another observation is that they influence each other in a complex way through mutual *inputs* and *outputs*. To understand these mechanisms it is helpful to make use of an interesting model to differentiate between four functions of civil society which are related to the historical development of statehood in the Western tradition. The following table uses this differentiation to identify the conflict transformation potential of civil society and CSOs.

**< Insert Table 2.2 Civil society Discourses and Their Potential for Conflict**

**Transformation >**

The CSOs working in these areas are either primarily movement-style and advocacy-oriented organizations or they are service-providing agencies. In the former case they concentrate mainly on the *input*-side of politics and try to influence political decision-making. In the latter case they operate chiefly on the *output*-side of politics, at least in so far as political authorities determine the conditions under which they work and decide on the resource allocation. This is obviously an ideal-typical differentiation, but it helps to understand the complex interaction between the two realms and the need to balance the composition of CSOs to ensure a complementary relationship with governmental and international agencies.

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If the conflict-related work of CSOs is primarily located in the *output*-sphere, e.g. by providing humanitarian or development aid there is the danger that their agenda is dominated by considerations within the realm of states, probably without a sufficient reflection of power political implications. In some cases it were particularly CSOs which emphasized issues on the *input* side, e.g. in the areas of lobbying for the banning of anti-person landmines or through establishing early warning mechanisms. However, to be effective it is obvious that they need to be integrated into the agendas of national and international governmental agencies and organizations.

The second most important issue of cooperation relates to the cooperation among different CSOs in this field. In light of tough competition over limited funding and despite all rhetoric about the need for burden-sharing, many CSOs still prioritize self-preservation over true and meaningful cooperation and coordination. This is even more paramount in light of the ever-increasing number of *outsider* actors getting involved in *other people's conflicts* and engaged with *insider* parties. External organizations often dominate the relationships with internal partners – in terms of financial and organizational resources as well as with respect to setting the agenda.

In fact, strategic, co-owned and joined up conflict transformation initiatives among external and internal CSOs and governments still are more the exception than the norm. Some argue that they are first and foremost accountable to the donors and their interests and to a lesser degree to their beneficiaries and their needs. As a matter of fact, most actors in conflict prevention and transformation continue to be dependent on funding from national or international donor agencies or government ministries. Which room therefore have CSOs to develop and implement an independent political agenda?

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This raises an issue which has found growing attention in the most recent past: how can meaningful partnerships be established between external and internal actors, including the donor community (IPA/WSP International, 2004)? Many CSOs are interested in facilitating long-term processes of social change. Yet, most donors are thinking in terms of concrete and representable results in order to satisfy their respective constituencies, to serve their strategic national interests and to be visible and influential among the donor community.

Despite this, there are also encouraging signs. The Peacebuilding Forum 2004 of the International Peace Academy and WSP International have generated a set of sound proposals for improving the coordination and interaction among the internal and external actors separately as well as the dialogue with each other. How far these recommendations will have chances to be implemented depends very much from the determination of CSOs to spell out their vision, their assumptions of social change and justice more explicitly and pro-actively. Furthermore, on the side of the donors, it calls for a more flexible, long-term oriented and risk-taking approach.

Apart from the issue of cooperation between different actors the other crucial topic is the development of a joint framework which allows the actors to organize their cooperation according to a common understanding of the conflict, its implications and the sharing of strategic goals. Ricigliano (2003) has emphasized that too often collaboration is just a secondary consideration which is brought in because of pragmatic or cost-related calculations and implemented in the form of sub-contracting. His argument is that for effective cooperation it is necessary to develop a common “theory of action” and to work towards Networks of Effective Action (NEA). Such NEA should bring actors together in a conflict zone across the various divisions in a “chaordic fashion” (decentralized decision-making,

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self-organizing, and flexible in form). Ideally it would bring together three types of peacebuilding interventions in the areas of political, social and structural transformation.

According to all experiences in the field, the network idea is indeed the key for establishing a sound and sustainable infrastructure of CSOs working for peace. In our assessment one of the key preconditions for establishing effective networks is the availability of actors with facilitation capacities and skills who are willing to serve and are accepted in that function and can also mobilize resources for the institutional capacity building of other members in the network. These functions can be provided by one member (but who should then because of conflicting interests not be a competitor for funding provided for other members in the network) or through sharing among several members.

Other variations of the network idea are focused on enhancing the capacities of all stakeholders to a conflict with respect to all key issues (e.g. the organization of an inclusive peace negotiation process; the identification of a viable power sharing arrangement; the organization of security enhancing measures; the management of development and rehabilitation efforts and the elaboration of an adequate mechanism for reconciliation and transitional justice).

### **Professionalization Discourse**

As a clear sign of a steady professionalization and standardization, the field has increasingly engaged in questions of lessons learned and best practices, and here particularly with respect to:

- . self-understanding and guiding principles, and
- . planning and assessment.

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These questions are best understood to be interrelated and highly interwoven.

### *Self-understanding and Guiding Principles*

As indicated at the beginning, the complex and multi-faceted nature of violent conflicts calls for non-governmental and governmental actors and strategies of different quality and quantity working together. Given the variety of actors and strategies, the field of conflict prevention and transformation has so far been reluctant to explicitly define itself and come with a common understanding of its underlying values and principles. Most actors take for granted their conflict transformation work being value-based, rooted in the projects of enlightenment and the “civilization of conflict”.

Additional to that, many actors recognized the need to frame their work in principles of impartiality/multi-partiality, cooperation, transparency, accountability and legitimacy for the last couple of years. Many organizations followed the examples of the ICRC International Alert, Search for Common Ground and developed codes of conduct. The development of these made the until then largely implicit and hidden value-based guiding principles of conflict transformation actors more explicit. While bringing into the open largely implicit ethics of conflict prevention and transformation work, the debate on guiding principles also made the self-understanding of CSOs more open for critical debate and scrutiny:

How far did the consciousness of common ethics led to a meaningful, different practice? It has to remain open how far the actors in the field of conflict prevention and conflict transformation interpret and operationalize guiding principles of accountability, impartiality and legitimacy in any comparatively similar and systematic way – both within and among CSOs. What does it, for example, mean for a conflict transformation organization to be

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impartial or multi-partial in the face of a highly asymmetric and fluid conflict dynamics and parties like in Sri Lanka? The point here is not so much that different CSOs should come up with similar interpretations of their guiding principles. What matters more is that CSOs consciously and openly assess how they project their interpretation of impartiality/multipartiality on the changing conflict setting and conflict stakeholders.

<Box>

### **Search for Common Ground's Operating Practices**

**Make long-term commitments.** Avoid parachuting - dropping into a conflict for a short visit. Use a continuing presence to develop a knowledge base and to build networks of relationships on all sides of the conflict.

**Use an integrated approach.** Work simultaneously on multiple levels and on multiple fronts, while striving for societal conflict transformation.

**Become engaged in order to see the possibilities.** Conflicts are extraordinarily complex, and it takes profound engagement in order to start to understand them. Although we conduct assessment missions before undertaking any new program, we strive to remain flexible to adapt to the changing environments in which we operate.

**Be social entrepreneurs.** Look for problem solvers and creative thinkers who, from a shared vision, can develop finite and achievable projects. Continuously develop new tools and approaches.

**Become immersed in local cultures.** Work with and build on individuals' and communities' knowledge, wisdom and creativity. Partner with local peace builders to strengthen their ability to transform their own conflicts.

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**Practice cooperative action.** Dialogue is a necessary but insufficient means to change attitudes and behaviors. Wherever possible, work with parties in conflict to help them not only understand their differences but also to act on their commonalities.

<End of Box>

While most guiding principles first and foremost focus on the outreach work with partner organizations, beneficiaries and donors, the key challenge remains on how to apply and implement the guiding principles within the organization and its respective team. What does it mean being truly impartial/multipartial in a highly asymmetric and continuously changing conflict setting in terms of the organizational and team development? How can CSOs implement internally what they preach externally?

Not only do most organizations struggle with “other people’s conflicts”, they also have to address their own internal team and organizational conflicts. In fact, in many local CSOs the dynamics of the conflict on the conflict is well reflected in the dynamics of the team and organizational development.

The review of the institutional structures of CSOs suggests that many actors of conflict prevention and transformation struggle to understand and act upon both the conflict-related and organization-related dynamics and changes. The “web of outside- and inside interpersonal conflicts” raises crucial questions of organizational and team development, which so far have been largely sidelined in the field. As a first step, CSOs have to understand themselves as “learning organizations” making organizational capacity building and team development one of its priorities. This requires not only conflict and communication skills development, but regular mentoring and coaching of staff who operate in a highly stressful, dynamic and contradictory conflict setting. Struggling to address both the organization-

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related and conflict-related changes could mean for many organizations nothing less than a painstaking and time-consuming exercise being open to regularly revising working priorities and reforming organizational structures. The biggest challenge here is how to improve and mainstream organizational and team development in the conflict prevention and conflict transformation work.

### **Box**

#### **International Alert's principles for conflict transformation work**

- 1. Primacy of people in transforming conflicts.* We believe that genuine conflict transformation is only possible with the participation and involvement of those most affected by the conflict.
- 2. Humanitarian concern.* Our primary motivation is the alleviation of human suffering and our engagement in situations of violent conflict is driven principally by concern for the societies and peoples at risk from such conflicts.
- 3. Human rights and humanitarian law & principles.* We are committed to the principle and practice of promoting human rights in our work in situations of violent internal conflict. We urge compliance with international humanitarian law & principles and respect for human rights amongst all parties to the conflict.
- 4. Respect for gender and cultural diversity.* We respect the dignity and cultural diversity of all peoples and we make no discrimination on grounds of nationality, race, class or gender or religious, cultural or political beliefs. We recognize and endeavor to build upon the capacities of people to resolve their own conflicts and we support the distinctive peacemaking roles of women in societies affected by violent conflict.

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*5. Impartiality.* We endeavor to be inclusive in our work, seeking access to the relevant parties to the conflict. We do not take sides in conflicts and we derive guidance from our adherence to the principles outlined in this Code, which we strive to advance in appropriate ways at all times.

*6. Independence.* We are an independent organization, free to formulate policies and operational strategies in accordance with our legally registered aims and the principles expressed in this Code.

*7. Accountability.* We are morally responsible to those whom we seek to assist and accountable to those with whom we work. We are bound by UK Charity Law through our trustees and accountable through regular reporting mechanisms to our donors. As a means of enhancing accountability, we endeavor to be open and transparent in our work.

*8. Confidentiality.* Whilst endeavoring to be open and transparent, we are committed to maintaining confidentiality in situations where the effectiveness of our programs or the security of our staff and partners may be at risk. Furthermore, we believe that, in most cases, conflict transformation work is best done discreetly.

*9. Partnerships.* We are committed to working in collaboration and complementarily with individuals, organizations, governments and other institutions that can contribute to the prevention and resolution of conflict. In particular, we believe sustainable conflict transformation is dependent upon effective co-operation with individuals and organizations within conflict-affected societies.

*10. Institutional learning.* We are committed to building up our collective pool of knowledge, institutional memory and experience through undertaking regular reviews and evaluations of our work and developing the skills of all our staff. Furthermore, we endeavor to share the

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lessons we learn with relevant individuals and organizations who may benefit from them and, in turn, learn from the experiences and knowledge of others.

<end box>

### *Planning and Assessment*

Much of the critical self-introspection went hand in hand with the development of “new” conflict-sensitive approaches and frameworks in the last couple years. The two most well-known and widely implemented approaches to date are *Do no Harm* (Anderson, 1999) and *Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment* (Berghof Handbook Dialogue Series), with the Do no Harm approach leading to the most radical re-thinking of Western development and humanitarian aid in conflict settings in the mid- and end 1990s. This approach mainly targeted at development and humanitarian aid aimed at preventing the negative, conflict-escalating effects of conflict interventions and strengthening the conflict-deescalating effects and factors. In the last couple of years, pressures of accountability on CSOs and donors provoked a stronger emphasis on impact assessment like Peace and Conflict Impact Assessments.

While the Do no Harm approach focused very much on how single development and humanitarian aid projects can prevent negative effects (working *in* conflict), the debate on Peace and Conflict Impact Assessments put centre-stage how development can explicitly generate positive impacts on the macro-level peace dynamics and factors (working *on* conflict). In reality, the difference between applying the Do no Harm and Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment frameworks has always been a blurred and fine one, with both approaches often lumped together under “conflict sensitivity” or more confusing under “conflict analysis”.

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These days both Do no Harm and Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment approaches are increasingly used as planning, monitoring and assessment procedures for conflict-sensitive projects. As far as planning and assessment procedures are concerned, there is a trend towards standardization and all-in-one universally applicable tool kits on the one hand and tailor-made tool-kits for the own organization on the other hand. At the same time, some development agencies like the German GTZ offer comprehensive tool kits on offer where one can pick and choose the appropriate tools (Leonhardt, 2001), while others organizations like the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation offer a step-by-step procedure.

The challenge remains how to mainstream conflict sensitivity in one's organizations' project cycle-management – in times of limited funding, lack of conflict knowledge and the organizational complexities as results of simultaneously mainstreaming gender, HIV/AIDS prevention, environmental issues and conflict sensitivity. Evidence shows that training in different conflict-sensitive methodologies like Do no Harm is crucial, but remains futile if they are not linked to the concrete experience of staff and structural, organizational changes. The biggest challenge here is how to successfully transfer and translate individual learning into the wider organizational learning process.

What the debates on Do no Harm, Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment and the more recent Reflecting on Peace Practice project have in common is the realization that even well-intended and planned conflict interventions have not been effective or relevant to the conflict context, while some interventions had a negative that is conflict-aggravating impact.

While Do no Harm puts vital questions of effectiveness on the agenda, the discussion on the Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment and Reflecting on Peace Practice projects took the debate further by also focusing on questions of relevance and impact of peacebuilding work.

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Much of this discourse is still in the “test phase”. Fundamental challenges and open questions remain. The following ones seem the most pressing and paramount ones:

*. How to measure impact?* Both the debates on the Reflecting on Peace Practice project and Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment highlighted the challenge to measure the impact of peacebuilding work on the macro-political level. Given that conflicts embody non-linear, fluid and contradictory processes and structures, how to trace linear causation/causal relationships between activities and outcomes? How to measure process-oriented relationship and confidence building, being very much at the core of most conflict transformation work? Current practice highlights of most donors and agencies shows that while considering Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment as increasingly technocratic procedures measuring impact, they fall into the trap of measuring (and proving!) outcomes only. It is still up for some debate how far CSOs as an immediate result of a Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment have improved their performances through a purposeful learning and changing process.

*. How to identify accurate and meaningful indicators of impacts?* What are meaningful indicators for processes initiated by conflict transformation actors? Both the debate on Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment and the Reflecting on Peace Practice project generate some criteria which have to be broken into meaningful indicators. The debate whether these indicators should be context-specific or generally applicable is still ongoing. It also raises the more general question if there should be, as some demand, standardized internationally agreed upon planning, assessment and evaluation criteria. Most importantly, the debate highlights the real need to spell out the clear strategic objectives of a project, against which indicators should be assessed.

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. *What kinds of tools are best usable for measuring impact?* Clearly, the debate on effectiveness, impact and relevance fostered the analytical knowledge and conflict-sensitive planning, strategizing and assessment within the field. While there has been progress on sophisticated conflict analyses and risks assessments, analytical frameworks and tools for measuring impact are still embryonic. Some favored the idea of “peace auditing” methodologies to assess CSOs in terms of peacebuilding impacts asking questions on their identity and values, relationships and linkages, and programs. The need remains for creative and innovative methods such as “scenario building” to be further developed and implemented. Other fresh impetus may come from game theory and chaos theory. Both do offer a different perspective from the cause-and-effect logic that underpins impact assessment.

. *How to identify success?* The Reflecting on Peace Practice project made clear that while most actors in conflict prevention and conflict transformation are able to identify negative impacts, most struggle how to identify “success” in their work (see discourse 1).

The over-arching challenge is how the field of conflict prevention and transformation while becoming a “professional peace industry” can remain its critical edge: how can we continue to work on long-term social change without being co-opted by short-term donor work priorities? Again, this dilemma is not easily reconciled, but stresses the real imperative to be more explicit about the heavily value-loaded work and to self-critically challenge one’s own “open and hidden agenda” of conflict prevention and transformation.

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Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment

The discourse on Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA) stresses the need for a thorough analysis of the conflict context. From this develops a methodology for the assessment and evaluation of peace and conflict impact that offers a framework for peacebuilding. However under the label PCIA we find quite different concepts and approaches. For some users, PCIA is a toolset that is applied for program planning, while others regard it as a framework for evaluation and cross-country comparison. Similarly, some view it as a method to contribute and monitor the contribution of an intervention to peacebuilding, while others use PCIA for screening the impact of a conflict on the project itself into work routines.

For more information, see Berghof Handbook Dialogue Series: [www.berghof-handbook.net/articles/pcia\\_complete.pdf](http://www.berghof-handbook.net/articles/pcia_complete.pdf)

<**end box**>

## **Conclusions**

The field of conflict prevention and transformation is shaped by an unchanged high level of frozen stalemates, violent struggles, fragile ceasefires and precarious peace processes. It is furthermore characterized by a changing multiplicity of discourses: they aim to address the changing challenges, unchanged high expectations from donors and partners on the one hand and the changing limitations of the work on the other hand.

The field has learned to change and achieved substantive progress with respect to its professionalism and the elaboration of networks and multi-track structures and processes. The main challenge is to learn from change and to link its impressive record of learned

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experiences with the need to reflect more systematically on the theoretical and highly political underpinning of its own work.

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“Zivilgesellschaft im Transformationprozess. By Hans-Joachim Lauth and Wolfgang Merkel.

Mainz 1997

*Notes*

<sup>1</sup> This paper is dedicated to Werner Lottje (1945-2004), a German pioneer in the field of Human Rights work through conflict prevention and conflict transformation, who has inspired both of us immensely with his vision and passion.

<sup>2</sup> Lewis Carroll, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.

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### **3. Effective Regional Networks and Partnerships**

**Andrés Serbin\***

*While globalization garners much attention around the world, organizations at local and regional levels are reacting to the trend by strengthening regional ties. Regional civil societies are emerging which reflect and embrace specific regional interests. In the field of conflict prevention and peacebuilding, networks and partnerships established at the regional level can play important role by interacting with local actors as well as governments, international organizations, and intergovernmental agencies.*

As the process of globalization has established itself ever more firmly, new opportunities have emerged around the world for organizations and civil society networks operating at the regional level. These regional entities are uniquely positioned to forge links to civil society activities at the national and local levels, on the one hand, and to global initiatives on the other hand. This is particularly true for regional networks engaged in conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

Regional networks and regional partnerships, including those involving governments, sub-regional and regional organizations, and local and regional civil society networks, are becoming crucial actors in early warning, early response and conflict management. However, to date, the links between those working at the local level with local expertise, and those working at the regional or global level have generally been weak. These links can be strengthened by creating formal mechanism that facilitate coordination and cooperation

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between individuals and organizations engaged in conflict prevention and peacebuilding at these various levels.

### **A Changing Global Dynamic**

Since the end of the Cold War, the world has been changing rapidly. Social, economic, and political relations have been undergoing a dramatic change. Technology has enabled connections that were not possible until recently, the breakdown of the bi-polar world dominated by the Soviet Union and the United States has changed the way states, regions, non-governmental entities, and individuals interact with each other, and the pre-eminence of the nation-state is being transformed. Globalization, is the word most-often used to refer to these processes — a kind of shorthand for a range of significant changes in the world order. One result of globalization has been that the centers of power and decision-making are more widely distributed than they had been in the past (a situation contested by some recent events as the war in Iraq), and that actors at all levels within the international community — sub-national, national, regional, trans-national and international — are increasingly capable of asserting global influence.

Within this framework, global civil society — all those individuals and organizations operating independently of governments and international organizations — has come to play an increasingly prominent role. Even the renewed attention to security issues in the wake of the September 11 attacks on the United States cannot halt this more fundamental shift in global relations. Global civil society is enormously rich and diverse, and engaged at all levels from the village level to the international. Among those players active in global civil society — and with growing importance in view of this changing global dynamic — are those that

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together are coalescing into what may be described as “regional civil societies” all over the world.

### **“Regionness” and Civil Society**

To some extent, in fact, the globalization process has elicited a response in the form of regionalization: not only governments but also civil society at the local and regional levels are coming together in response to a perception of vulnerability and exclusion and the sense that local and regional autonomy has been sacrificed as a result of globalization. Where civil society organizations see shared interests and goals, they are forging links and creating networks that traverse national boundaries, with the aim of addressing crucial regional issues. Each of these networks will have its own particular dynamic, its own agenda, and its own strategies.

To the extent that these processes are undertaken with the specific intent of strengthening regional identity and the mechanisms of regional interaction and cooperation (rather than for specific goals associated with the objectives and programs of the organizations themselves) we can speak of a trend toward “regionness”. Here, we see partnerships among civil society organizations, civil society networks, national governments and regional inter-governmental organizations. These regional partnerships are involved, among other things, in the identification, preservation and strengthening of regional common goods, including, significantly, conflict resolution and the construction of a culture of peace.

Thus, those engaged in the effort to build a more equitable, peaceful, people-oriented global community need to understand that what occurs at the regional level is of vital importance.

The dynamics at the regional level are also crucial to the maintenance and strengthening of cultural diversity and pluralism, particularly in view of the pressures towards conformity and

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uniformity associated with globalization. In each region and country, civil society expresses itself uniquely, and conflict prevention has its own distinct characteristics and dynamic.

Those working on global initiatives need to recognize and respect these regional differences if the aim is to implement conflict prevention strategies that are appropriate in specific cultural, social, and geopolitical contexts.

These days, many of the most pressing issues on the international agenda are issues which merit the attention not only of states, but also non-state actors with their own specific concerns and interests. These actors, operating in various civil society networks and as representatives of independent organizations, have gained considerable credibility and influence in recent years. One result is that issues that once were local concerns — respect for human rights and the rule of law (including, especially, international law), and adherence to democratic practices — are issues addressed in the international arena.

Still, the implications of the simultaneous emergence of global and civil societies, on the one hand, and this “new regionalism” on the other hand, have been largely overlooked. There have been limited attempts to understand the linkages between globalization and regionalization, and there is been little interest in how these linkages might affect networks and other types of interaction at the regional level.

### **New Synergies**

The linkages formed between civil society initiatives at the regional and global levels create new synergies that contribute to the democratization of, and increased influence of citizens in international decision-making processes. Civil society organizations and networks are gradually developing new forms of “citizen diplomacy” on both the global and the regional levels. These groups are monitoring governmental agencies, international organizations and

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multilateral fora and call on them to better manage the process of globalization and to act in the interests of common citizens. Through citizen diplomacy, civil society exerts pressure from the bottom-up, overcoming the usual democratic deficits inherent to international processes, and broadening and strengthening democracy.

### **An Example**

The recently established Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) is an example of just such an effort to forge links between global and regional civil society processes and initiatives in order to create and exploit synergies in the field of conflict prevention and peacebuilding. It is not the only initiative under way where the aim is the coordination of regional initiatives on a global level, but, with an agenda focused squarely on the prevention of war, violent conflict and peacebuilding, it can become one of the most relevant to the lives of the citizens of the world.

The Global Partnership embraces a global vision, but its base consists of fifteen regional networks providing the necessary inputs to forge a global action agenda on conflict prevention and peacebuilding. This bottom-up structure allows for the expression and pursuit of different cultural and political ways of dealing with violent conflict. It also results in a partnership that is pluralistic, interactive, and accountable – an example of how a civil society initiative may articulate local, regional and global concerns, without disregarding the particular traits and dynamics of each region.

<Box>

**The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict**

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This Partnership was established in June 2003, in the Netherlands. The incentive came from UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's report, *The Prevention of Armed Conflict* (2001), in which he "urge[s] NGOs with an interest in conflict prevention to organize an international conference of local, national and international NGOs on their role in conflict prevention and future interaction with the United Nations in this field" (recommendation 27).

The Global Partnership is formed to build a new international consensus on the prevention of violent conflict and peacebuilding. It is pursuing its goals and activities through fifteen regional processes, which comprise the fabric of the initiative and will develop action agendas to reflect principles and priorities for their region. Regional initiators, who collectively govern the direction of the Global Partnership through an International Steering Group, facilitate the regional processes. An International Secretariat, currently hosted by ECCP, serves the global process.

The Global Partnership is working towards the creation of a sustainable network of people and organizations committed to conflict prevention and peacebuilding. In the line of the recommendations in the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on Civil Society and UN Relationships (the Cardoso Panel), in which the panel recommends the UN to forge multi-stakeholder partnerships to deal with global issues, the Global Partnership aims to include governments, regional and multilateral organizations and the United Nations in this partnership and to invent or improve mechanisms for interaction between these actors and civil society.

The Global Conference at UN Headquarters in July 2005, "From Reaction to Prevention", will serve as the launching point for the Global Action Agenda, outlining conflict prevention principles, policies and practices to be adopted by civil society organizations, the UN system and governments.

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The Global Partnership aims to support a shift from reaction to prevention through the following goals:

1. To create a sustainable network of individuals and groups committed to prevention and peacebuilding at global, regional, and national levels. Strong regional networks are crucial as there is a host of small organizations active in this field and it is important that they know what others are doing, what their strengths and capacities are, and how they can best work together. Unfortunately, regional networks in the field of conflict prevention and peacebuilding are virtually non-existent in a number of regions – as was a global network until the Global Partnership was forged.
2. To articulate and work towards the implementation of a policy change agenda, as articulated in the series of Regional Action Agendas and in the Global Action Agenda, that will strengthen the effectiveness of conflict prevention and peacebuilding.
3. To generate and mobilize diverse public constituencies around the world who are informed about the need for prevention and peacebuilding and the important role of civil society in achieving it and who actively support human security as an alternative to militarism.

For more information, see [www.gppac.net](http://www.gppac.net)

**<End of Box>**

### **Think Globally, Focus Regionally**

Currently, much work in the field of conflict prevention tends to focus on global actors. But focusing on UN agencies, powerful governments and intergovernmental organizations (INGOs) is not sufficient when dealing with conflict prevention on the ground. Regional

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networks and initiatives, with strong links to the grass roots at the community level, are crucial for any global peacebuilding process, particularly when dealing with sub-regional or regional conflicts.

Often, the root causes of a conflict can be traced to regional factors – historical, political, economic and geographic in nature. At the same time, local conflicts can become regionalized as they spill across borders (Sriram and Nielsen, 2004:3). To manage such conflicts, then, it is only logical to involve not only the international organizations (be they inter-governmental or civil society), but also regional and sub-regional organizations and networks with strong links to local and community-based organizations. Such regional players can play a significant role not only in early warning and early response, but also in crisis management on the ground. It is, therefore, important to build partnerships which bring CSOs together with governments, intergovernmental, sub-regional, and regional organizations. This is all the more important in view of the fact that CSOs often have a better knowledge and understanding of the regional political and cultural dynamics, greater capacity to analyze local developments, and well-established (and sometimes extremely complex) links with contending local parties.

Regional actors will often be capable of more effective conflict prevention interventions and peacebuilding than outside agencies which may be perceived with mistrust or suspicion by regional and local actors, and which, in any case, may lack the knowledge and expertise of local and regional players. As Zoe Nielsen noted (2004:181) in addressing conflict in the Horn of Africa,

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“Regional and sub-regional organizations may be better placed to act, because some governments are more open to intervention by their peers than by organizations or governments that have no link to the region.”

However, regional actors may also be perceived as too partial, or may be identified too closely with one of the contending parties.

Nevertheless, there are numerous examples of regional entities which have effectively intervened to manage conflict – sometimes more effectively than external actors. These include regional organizations such as the Organization of American States (OAS) in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Intergovernmental Agency for Development (IGAD) in the Horn of Africa or the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in West Africa; groups of “friends”, such as the Contadora Group during the Central American crisis in the 1980s or the “Group of Friends” intervening in the conflict between Ecuador and Peru in the 1990s; and regional “zones of peace” promoted by national governments or regional integration initiatives in South America and in Central America.

However, few of these regional initiatives, even if successful, have been based on CSO participation or developed in partnership with CSOs. Instead, they have generally tended to be predominantly governmental or intergovernmental, conceived basically from above and often ignoring the knowledge, expertise and commitment that CSOs and local, grassroots organizations can bring. They also have also tended to be reactive, acting in response to emerging crises or conflicts, and focusing on conflict mediation, management, or resolution, or on post-conflict peacebuilding. Very few of them have focused on conflict prevention as such, and very few even tried to engage local and grassroots civil society organizations.

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Instead, they have operated primarily at the macro level, where general agreements on policies and goals may be achievable, but where effective strategies for conflict prevention or the establishment of early warning systems are rarely formulated or implemented, and which, at any rate, proceed without the benefit of local expertise or commitment. This is unfortunate.

<Box>

### **The UN, the OAS and CSOs in Latin American and the Caribbean**

There is a general perception that the Organization of American States (OAS) is consistently and pro-actively involved in responding to conflict throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, with the UN most often playing a secondary role to the OAS and state actors. Interestingly, however, the OAS frames its engagement as promoting democratization and human rights rather than as promoting peace and security or preventing conflicts per se<sup>1</sup>. This is also perhaps one of the reasons why the language of “prevention” and “peacebuilding” is unfamiliar to many in the region. What is also true is that CSO engagement with OAS peace initiatives is very limited. The OAS does acknowledge CSO and regional networks, particularly those related to human rights issues, and consults them as well, but these networks nonetheless have little influence or involvement in conflict prevention or peace processes. Once a conflict has been settled, CSOs are invited to contribute to post-conflict reconstruction, as has occurred on several occasions in Central America, or to support the activities of UN peace forces, as in the recent crisis in Haiti. But in general, both regional and local CSO have only limited involvement on the ground and their roles are usually restricted to the regional macro level, where dialogue and interaction with governments or the OAS bodies may occur.

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Additionally, as the experience of CRIES (La Coordinadora Regional de Investigaciones Económicas y Sociales – Regional Coordination for Economic and Social Research) shows, Latin American governments and the OAS are disinclined to seriously consider CSO perspectives and recommendations on conflict prevention. Clearly, building an effective partnership linking local and regional CSOs and CSO networks, governments, and intergovernmental organizations will require a long and sustained process.

Through a regional initiative led by the CRIES and commissioned by the Citizens' Diplomacy Forum (FDC), Latin American and Caribbean civil society organizations and networks have, in recent years, begun to strengthen their networking and advocacy capacities in the field of regional and global security, peacebuilding and conflict prevention. With the establishment of GPPAC, civil society organizations at the regional level have been able to forge stronger links and improve coordination with other relevant regional and global actors. Furthermore, civil society organizations are also laying the foundations for a more fundamental transformation of conflict management, which has, in most cases in Latin America, been more about conflict resolution and conflict mediation than conflict prevention, and viewed as a matter exclusively within the purview of governments.

**<End of Box>**

### **How Civil Society Organizations Fit In**

If early warning systems were established at the national level and coordinated on a sub-regional or regional level through regional civil society networks, they could serve as important elements in a larger effort to implement pro-active preventive measures from the bottom up. With the involvement and commitment of civil society organizations, it would then be possible to warn other actors and to encourage them to take preventive action at an

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early stage. Such partnerships could play especially useful roles responding at an early stage to local conflicts where there is a very real risk of regional spillover.

Several recent developments in West Africa show, as Catherine Barnes (2004) observed, that it is possible to channel grass roots CSO involvement in early warning and conflict prevention into highly flexible, creative initiatives that promote dialogue and mobilize across a broad cross-section of society. Furthermore, it is possible to build broader partnerships with governmental or international organizations, in order to promote positive change, address conflict and reduce violence and, especially (if not explicitly), to develop social capital and strengthen democratic norms and procedures.

Barnes cites John Katunga, of the Nairobi Peace Initiative-Africa, who observed that civil society actors can play an important role in two ways: by channeling information to appropriate international and/or governmental actors capable of dealing with conflict; and also by offering reassurance to local communities by providing accurate and reliable information about what is going on and, if appropriate, advising local actors.

CSOs with roots in conflict-affected communities may be able to shape appropriate strategies and policies to deal with local tensions and conflicts, particularly when they have the recognition and support of a broader network of partners committed to the peaceful resolution of conflicts and the strengthening of democratic institutions. However, if outside actors are perceived to be attempting to impose external solutions on the local parties, the credibility of the local CSO may be undermined. In other words, external expertise and guidance, while crucial to these processes, should not be allowed to hinder the internal, local dynamics which are themselves integral to meaningful, firmly based, sustainable change.

**Linking Bottom to Top: Essential Partnerships**

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The effectiveness of local grassroots/community-based organizations working on the ground can be enhanced when they are supported by wider regional CSO networks. These local organizations have solid knowledge of the local environment, and they are familiar with the local actors and cultural norms. The wider CSO networks can help to establish communication channels and links with more powerful outside actors, such as governmental agencies, INGOs, or intergovernmental regional organizations, and assist in the analysis of any specific measure or initiative. It follows, then, that conflict prevention initiatives can be made more effective when broad partnerships are established between local CSOs, larger CSO networks and INGOs, and governmental and intergovernmental agencies on a regional level.

In fact, as part of a global initiative for conflict prevention and peacebuilding, these partnerships can be considered essential building blocks. The implication, then, is that such partnerships should not be established on an *ad hoc* basis, but rather in a more formal process, through consultation, research and networking, in order to create formal mechanisms which bring CSOs into deliberative, interactive and consultative processes and allow for the design and implementation of collectively agreed strategies (Barnes, 2004). At the same time, it is crucial that institution building and reform take place to assure the successful implementation of long-term strategies of conflict prevention that effectively address the root causes of future conflicts (Sriram, 2004: 156).

As Barnes noted, in this regard, it is important to take into account that:

. Regional and subregional prevention mechanisms are most likely to be effective if they develop according to the needs of the area and respond to the existing patterns of regional

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conflict dynamics. The implication is that they do not necessarily have to reflect already existing structures.

. Mechanisms may be developed under the auspices of a regional or subregional organization, or under the auspices of the UN, or be developed collaboratively, depending on what capabilities already exist on the ground. Consistent with the subsidiarity principle, the UN should fill in gaps in a complementary and additive manner.

. The engagement of local and regional CSOs and networks and the exploration of mechanisms for appropriate ongoing cooperation and partnerships should be priorities. In areas of the world where existing regional organizations are more closed, the UN can play an important role by opening up space for CSO involvement in dialogue on conflict-related issues and strategies,

. The establishment of advisory councils on conflict should be considered, with the participation of local and regional CSOs, governmental agencies and regional organizations.

A broad cross-section of civil society actors should be involved in these processes, with representation from local networks, regional CSOs and networks, academia, the media, and religious organizations. The international community has a role to play as well, particularly by channeling development assistance to conflict prevention initiatives (Sriram and Nielsen, 2004: 11).

### **Interregional Cooperation**

There is, beyond these regional partnerships, a place for interregional cooperation as part of this global process. Such cooperation, in the form of the sharing of experiences and the exchange of information, collaborative research and networking, and the development of

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joint strategies, can contribute significantly not only to the global process, but also to interregional initiatives and CSO dialogue. This has occurred with interregional collaboration between the North American and the Latin American and the Caribbean Global Partnership regional networks. These initiatives are particularly relevant when dealing with powerful governmental actors or with regional organizations, consolidating resources and expertise to further advocacy and dissemination activities, or developing joint strategies to influence policies, policymakers, government officials, or parties to a conflict.

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### **Interregional cooperation in the Americas**

There are two Global Partnership regional networks in the Western Hemisphere: one for North America and one for Latin America and the Caribbean. Each region is enormously complex and interregional cooperation does not, therefore address specific conflict situations, but rather areas where “added value” can be reasonably expected as the result of collaboration. Interregional collaboration must also take into account the high demands on resources and time required for ongoing regional and country-level activities. Taking these constraints into consideration, the following objectives were identified:

. The creation and strengthening of links between civil society organizations working in the areas of security and conflict prevention in the Americas.

. The systematic sharing of knowledge and information between the North American and the Latin American and Caribbean the CSO regional initiatives in the context of the Global Partnership.

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. The comparison of the regional experiences of civil society organizations in conflict prevention, contributions to joint research activities, and cooperation on additional activities beyond the scope of the global initiative

. The promotion of dialogue between civil society organizations in the Americas and regional institutions in order to strengthen initiatives throughout the Americas focusing on conflict prevention, conflict resolution, peacebuilding and security.

**<End of Box>**

### **The Regional Networking Imperative**

In the spring of 2004 the European Centre for Conflict Prevention, organized the European Conference on the Role of Civil Society in the Prevention of Armed Conflict in the framework of the Global Partnership. At Dublin Castle in the Republic of Ireland, the 230 participants who work actively in the field of conflict prevention and peacebuilding in Europe, adopted the “Dublin Action Agenda on the Prevention of Violent Conflict”. Several of the points in the agenda point to the importance with which GPPAC views networking. The Agenda calls for a “new partnership for prevention between civil society, governments and IGOs.” It further states:

“Effective conflict prevention requires the creation of collaborative, strategic partnerships for prevention at the national, regional, and international level. CSOs can undertake initiatives that government officials cannot and are well placed to mobilize wider societal support for prevention. The effectiveness of this partnership hinges on official legitimacy of CSOs that are representative and accountable in peace and security matters; recognition of their roles in

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the conflict prevention partnership; and the mechanisms and resources to fulfill their potential operationally.”

In this chapter, the focus has been especially on how those partnerships can be forged at the regional level. As civil society continues to expand, the possibilities for effective regional partnerships should continue to grow. It can only be hoped that the influence of these networks will expand as well, and that the outcomes will a tangible reduction in armed conflict.

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### **Understanding Networks**

In these early years of the twenty-first century, networks are ubiquitous. They appear in various forms, from well structured with high-tech features, to interrelated decentralized units, to barely visible, loose and informal. They can appear all of a sudden and then disappear as soon as their function has been fulfilled, or they can endure for long periods of time.

Networks may be formed for various reasons:

. To promote cooperation based on complementary interests and objectives, especially when there is a scarcity of means.

. To facilitate the exchange of information and experience when the issues or tasks at hand are complex.

. To realize the benefits of economies of scale through collective learning, analysis, and implementation.

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- . To avoid duplication of efforts and identify skills gaps.
  
- . To maximize the impact of an intervention, particularly when engaged in advocacy and lobbying.
  
- . To expand outreach and to have a presence or impact at various levels of society.
  
- . To draw on a range of skills, opinions, and insights.

In the area of peacebuilding and conflict transformation, networks fulfill an obvious need to connect people from different areas, backgrounds and ideologies. Networks are becoming a favored organizational form wherever a broad operational field is involved (e.g. where links are being made between different regions, or between the grassroots and higher levels of society), where problems or themes are so dynamic that rigid structures are not suitable, and where loose ties are preferable to formal organizational bonds. All these features are well known in areas of violent conflicts.

There is no single way to classify networks, but most peacebuilding networks can be distinguished by their function, theme or topic. Examples include, for instance, networks focusing on human rights, democratic movements, or marginalized groups, or networks of professionals engaged in research and/or the application of conflict transformation and mediation skills. These networks all exist to facilitate the exchange of information and the process of learning, to coordinate and cooperate on policy and practical issues, and/or to formalize interactions and connections between different groups in order to increase their collective impact.

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Some networks exist more to serve the needs of their members than to project outwardly.

Within such “passive” networks, the primary objectives are likely to be the sharing of information and experience (see diagram below). Moving along an axis, other activities might include facilitating dialogue, or providing expertise. “Active” networks are focused more on the outside world, engaging in advocacy and lobbying, for example, or going beyond that to “pro-active” engagement in early warning, for example, or actual interventions to prevent or resolve conflict. The more passive the network, the less that will be required from the members in terms of commitment, and the less formal structure that will be required. A highly engaged, pro-active network demands high levels of commitment from its participants, and a more formalized structure.

**< Insert Table 3.1 Functions of Networks >**

Networks, by definition, have a relatively loose organizational structure. But that does not mean that a network can exist without some guidance and some delegation of responsibilities. In fact, in many cases, the strength or weakness of a network is proportional to the strength or weakness of the network’s coordinating body. And in most cases, that means that a secretariat should be established and supported with adequate funding and facilities. Even in widely distributed, informal, decentralized networks, there needs to be a delineation of authority and responsibility, or some tasks will be left undone, while others may be duplicated.

While networking offers benefits and advantages over other approaches to organizing and advocacy, it presents particular difficulties and challenges as well. One of the strengths of the network, for example, is that a broad cross section of NGOs can participate. But within certain NGO sectors, particularly among organizations working in development or providing

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humanitarian assistance, where impartiality is a vital credential, there is an inherent reluctance to engage with networks that may be perceived as too “political”. Creating a broad network drawing on various NGO sectors may also be difficult because there are great differences in the organizational cultures of the large international NGOs and the smaller and more informal local and regional NGOs.

Because the network is, in a sense, a multi-headed beast, one of the serious challenges it will face is to establish for itself a public voice that is clear, sufficiently assertive, and representative of the shared vision of all the network’s members. Reaching consensus on positions with respect to specific issues can be exhausting and frustrating work. And the members of the network may discover that, as the profile of the network grows, their own profiles will be diminished. If, by virtue of its own success, a network saps the strength of its members, it won’t be able to sustain its success for long.

Both of these considerations suggest that for maximum effectiveness, there may be limits to the size, breadth, and diversity of a network. The instinct of networkers is to be inclusive, to draw in all who have an interest and will be capable of making a contribution. But if a network is so broad that virtually nothing distinguishes those who join from those who remain outside, there’s not likely to be much depth of commitment or much of a common agenda to which all can agree.

There is at least one more caveat for networkers that should not be ignored: networking costs a great deal of time, money, and energy. No one should think that because the load is shared, it is lighter. And while everyone in the network is expected to contribute, the benefits of participation will not be evenly distributed. Some will be “net payers” investing much in

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human resources and possibly funds, while others will be “net receivers”. The returns, of course, are not just in terms of resources, but also in terms of experience, information, public recognition, access, etc. And as such, they are difficult to measure.

Because networking is based on connecting various interests, experiences and behaviors in pursuit of a common goal, networks are full of inherent tensions. For example, the various participants in the network have come together because they have complementary objectives. But each participant also has a unique agenda, and those agendas will not always be parallel. In fact, where organizations and individuals are engaged in similar work, they may well be competing for support from the public, the media spotlight, and funds. Balancing this tension between complementarity and competition is a constant challenge in networking. Effective networking demands, in the end, that the participants acknowledge and accept that tensions will exist and attempt to manage rather than eliminate these tensions.

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Networks can assume a variety of forms. Ideally, the institutional form of a network is the product of its function and the context. Three models predominate:

. *The spider web model* – a strongly centralized network with a central secretariat and circles emanating from the center, often at various levels. There may be links between the various levels as well, but the primary linkage is back to the center.

. *The fishnet model or cell-structure* – there is no central coordinating body. Instead, each member shares in the coordinating responsibilities, and each member maintains and coordinates relationships with those in closest proximity.

. *The chain model* – actors are linked to each other in a line, where actions or information can be passed along, or an end objective can be achieved by carrying out consecutive steps along a chain. The chain model is fragile, since it is rendered ineffective if a break occurs anywhere along the chain.

*This text has been excerpted and adapted from an unpublished paper by Fulco van Deventer (director of I/C Consult), with additional information drawn from an unpublished paper by Paul van Tongeren and Guido de Graaf Bierbrauwer and from “Lessons Learned on Networking: On National and International Levels and Interactions of NGOs with Governments”. In: Toward Better Peacebuilding, edited by Anneke Galama and Paul van Tongeren, European Centre for Conflict Prevention, 2002.*

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**Notes**

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1. The focus of regional organizations vary greatly whereas OAS frames its engagement as promoting democratization and human rights rather than as promoting peace and security or preventing conflicts per se. Other regional organizations such as ASEAN focus more on security and order.

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#### **4. UN–Civil Society Interactions: Working Together for Peace**

John Clark\*

*The coming years will see a growing role for civil society, the private sector, parliamentarians and local authorities in the UN and other forums of global governance. This chapter argues that these organizations should engage to the fullest extent possible to the myriad groups who purport, with varying authenticity, to speak for the people. This will however not be without controversy. The main tension will concern the role of policy-oriented civil society organizations.*

While the Second World War still raged, 26 governments came together to found a new organization that might ensure a world without future war and foster development. The Charter establishing the United Nations was agreed by this small gathering, but in the name of all humanity – hence its resounding first few words: “We, the Peoples ...”. None questioned whether this group, many of whom represented undemocratic governments, had the right to speak for the world’s people. Universally, citizens were tired of wars that they paid for by their blood and taxes.

Things are very different today. While most governments are democratically elected now and are more powerful in many ways (including militarily), their remit to speak for “we the peoples” is more contested. This is becoming a clear feature of 21<sup>st</sup> century politics as myriad groups have emerged who purport, with varying authenticity, to speak for the people.

Governments vary as to how attentive they are to these voices, though even the least democratic are not entirely deaf to them. The dilemma for an international organization such

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as the UN is the degree to which it should have its *own* mechanisms to engage with these voices or leave it to its Member States.

This chapter argues that the UN and other international organizations should engage to the fullest extent possible, short of making reasonable governments feel that their unique right to define the basic policies of those organizations has been usurped. Governments must retain the lead in tackling global issues; and their citizens will suffer if there are no forums where they can negotiate with their peers on collectively addressing a shared, global agenda. On the other hand, they must recognize that other stakeholders are vital for this agenda, and there are compelling reasons for opening avenues for both listen to and working with them. A global organization must have clear global standards. It should work as much as possible in the same way throughout the world – hence it makes no sense to engage closely with civil society in some countries but not others.

### **Why Other Voices Have Become More Powerful**

The discussions concerning the UN becoming a more outward-looking institution, engaging with civil society and others beyond its formal membership of governments, is not essential because this is the direction of fashion or political-correctness. It is because the world has changed in the decades since its birth and the UN can only tackle today's global priorities effectively by broadening. There are four sets of global changes of relevance.

First is the rise of *stakeholder power*. Large corporations, religious leaders, leading media channels and others have immense *inherent* power today because of their economic, political and social muscle. Some governments resist this tide (for example by controlling the media,

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muzzling free expression and dominating production) but it is increasingly clear that they do so at the long-term expense of their nations.

Second is the *democratization of information*. The internet has leveled the playing field regarding access to information. People – especially the young and the more politically active – increasingly draw on web-based sources. Since these are “scale-free” (their costs do not rise according to demand), it is no longer necessary to be rich to inform what people know and how they think. This contributes to rising cynicism about governments, large corporations and others who shape the world we live in, and heightens trust in civil society organizations and others who provide these independent information sources.

Thirdly, there are *realities of governance*. The 191 states who comprise the UN today have vastly different global footprints; the “one nation one vote” principle no longer reflects how power is really shared. The control of other bodies by the largest economies is equally problematic. Hence shifting coalitions, depending on the issue, have emerged to counterbalance the vast inherent power of the United States and European Union.

Fourthly, of course, there are the *forces of globalization*. New technology, transnational capitalism, and increasing acceptance of markets forces have dramatically shaped today’s power balance. Large corporations and the U.S. government are amongst the obvious winners, but so too are organizations within civil society who have pioneered global activism (Clark, 2003). However it is also increasingly apparent that today’s pressing problems are often global by origin and hence require global responses. This applies equally to the AIDS

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pandemic, drugs trade, climate change, the world water crisis, and terrorism. These issues have often been put on the global agenda by civil society.

These phenomena combine to present an important lacuna in policy-making: while a great deal of the *substance* of politics has become global (trade, economics, climate change, HIV/AIDS, SARS, terrorism etc), the *process* of conventional politics has not. Its main institutions – elections, political parties and parliaments – remain rooted at the national level – hence the gap. CSOs, on the other hand, are well able to adapt to working in strong global organizations and networks (Cardoso Panel, 2004).

This means that democracy now means more than the right of citizens to vote every few years for politicians to represent them across the spectrum of political matters. Such *representative* democracy has become diminished as disenchantment with electoral politics spreads. The more politically active citizens today are increasingly able to take part in *participatory* democracy as well. By joining NGOs, pressure groups, social movements, protests etc, they are entering directly the debates that most interest them.

In traditional democracy we are grouped according to where we live; our neighborhoods form the constituencies for which we elect our parliamentary representatives. The range of political parties often assumes that our class and income, and the locality where we live, are the determinants of our politics. Participatory democracy is changing the *geography* of politics. It allows us to aggregate differently – with others who share our burning concerns wherever they live. In other words community of *neighborhood* is being supplemented by community of *interest* – and, thanks to modern information and communications technologies (ICT), such communities can be global as easily as local.

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### **What These Changes Mean for the UN**

Not only does a new agenda confront international organizations reflecting these new global challenges, but their *modus operandi* must also change. Today's political realities necessitate that they respond to concerns of *all* main stakeholders, not just governments, and that they also recognize the practical contributions those stakeholders can make to tackling the new priorities. As civil society organizations that focus on concerns of the politically and economically weak have multiplied and become more powerful, issues of *inclusion, trust, and individual security* have become more prevalent.

These new imperatives have been recognized in numerous UN resolutions and speeches by UN leaders, but fine words mean little unless backed by comparable actions. Often these pronouncements have not born fruit for two reasons. First, Member States are reluctant to share power with CSOs; this is especially so for developing countries who already think their power in the UN has weakened while that of the US and Europe has become unassailable. Ironically those with weakest democratic traditions are often first to point out that CSO leaders are mostly unelected. Second, the UN has not invested to ensure a constructive engagement with civil society, especially at the country level where CSOs find that, contrary to the rhetoric about dialogue and partnership, Resident Missions are often unresponsive to them and are sparing with information about forward plans – hence there is little opportunity in practice for CSOs to help shape those plans.

Unless it changes the institutional culture by encouraging openness, rewarding staff efforts to work closely with civil society and investing resources to make this possible, progress will be slow. This will be disappointing to NGOs and others in civil society for whom the United Nations is a vitally important organization, but it will be damaging to the UN itself. It will find that its ability to negotiate international agreements that have traction will diminish

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unless it can foster growing public demand for such treaties and high public respect for the UN's role in nurturing them. This requires good relations with leading actors in civil society, the media and political life.

The imperative to work in new ways has been well demonstrated by the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL). As evidence mounted about the terrible human cost of anti-personnel mines and other devices, various efforts were made through UN channels to promote a ban on their use in the 1970s and 80s. These failed to bear fruit because a number of powerful governments resisted them. Hence in 1992 an informal coalition began to form of NGOs, religious groups, academics and others – backed by a growing body of supportive governments, particularly Canada. The latter convened two exceptional conferences that led to the adoption of a treaty banning landmines in 1996. This treaty has now been ratified by 143 governments (as of October 2004). Although this remarkable campaign deservedly won the Nobel Peace Prize (in 1997) it has not yet secured the prize it truly seeks – the universal ban. The US still refuses to sign the treaty, as do China, Russia, India and others. However, what is pertinent to our present discussions is that the breakthrough came as a result of an ad hoc global policy network of NGOs and governments (not conventional UN channels) that took the issue outside UN forums, and only brought it back to the UN once sufficient support for the treaty had been achieved. For the UN to be fully relevant in the future, it must become able to service such iterative and informal processes directly.

This way of working is not entirely new for the UN. Indeed it has been a characteristic of the "Big Conferences" tackling major global issues in the last twelve years. These helped shape an emerging set of *cosmopolitan political rules and norms* transcending national sovereignty – especially in areas of human rights, gender relations and the environment. Although some governments resist these trends, the UN has recognized that constructive and strategic

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engagement with civil society is a vital weapon for facing its main challenges today. A UN that is more attuned to global public opinion, that is strongly connected with leading CSOs, and that can broker dialogue with all relevant stakeholders is better able to succeed in those challenges and strengthen global governance. In short there is a symbiosis: civil society is strengthened by opportunities the UN offers but this gives a new *raison d'être* that in turn empowers the UN and enhances its relevance.

A vital aspect of this is to strengthen civil society involvement in deliberative processes at the country-level, not just in headquarters. This demands a cultural shift throughout the UN group of agencies to see local CSOs as vital to policy making, not just as potential operational partners. The UN's regional commissions have a pivotal role in making this happen by orchestrating regional deliberative processes and acting as an intermediary between the specialized agencies and the UN's global policy process. The experience of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe in engaging civil society in the Aarhus Convention (on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters) is an interesting example to learn from. The regional commissions could also help encourage uniformly high standards of civil society engagement and could help facilitate CSO applications for UN accreditation from developing countries.

### **Tackling Conflict**

In no other field is engagement with civil society more vital than in the field of conflict and security. The characteristics of the issues addressed by the UN's Security Council today are radically different from those of earlier decades. Conflicts tend to be intra-state, rather than between states; they involve developing countries, rather than rich ones (with some notable

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exceptions!); 90 percent of casualties are civilians, whereas in the UN's early days 90 percent of casualties were combatants; their origins often lie in ethnic or sectarian divides, rather than national politics; and the Council increasingly focuses on threats other than armed conflicts, including global public health threats. Furthermore, the global public is much better informed and less tolerant of collateral human suffering.

Whereas "old" conflicts were well understood by diplomats and specialists in political science, this new agenda requires much more on-the-ground knowledge, new skills of social and cultural analysis, the active involvement of communities and their leaders, links to vulnerable groups, bridges into mainstream development processes and new ways of working. Humanitarian NGOs and other categories of civil society often have strong (sometimes unique) insights into these new needs. Hence the Council has become increasingly receptive to information and analysis from civil society – through informal meetings (particularly through the so-called "Arria formula" meetings between the Council and invited experts on the topic at hand).

Although this engagement – as well as dialogue between NGOs and Member States in their capitals – is important, very few from conflict-affected countries get a chance to brief the Council on their experience and concerns. There are sometimes Council Field Missions, which may meet with local NGOs, but this practice is still very rare.

### **How the UN Can Enhance its Relations with Stakeholders**

The UN Secretary-General is well aware of these challenges and has identified enhancing relations with civil society and others as one of his main reform goals. His early efforts in this regard, however, revealed the many political difficulties. To give guidance on this path, he

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commissioned a Panel of Eminent Persons on Civil Society and UN Relationships – chaired by Fernando Henrique Cardoso, the former president of Brazil, and comprising twelve distinguished people from diverse geographic and sector backgrounds. What follows is a summary of the Panel’s main proposals, contained in its report (Cardoso, 2004).

The Panel’s starting observation was that today’s multilateralism is different to that of thirty years ago. Then, governments would come together to debate an emerging issue and build sufficient consensus for a treaty which international organizations would be responsible for implementing. Today, it is increasingly likely that a civil society movement and crescendo of public opinion puts a new issue on the global agenda; next some like-minded governments take up the cause and start pressing for global action; together with the civil society protagonists they form an ad hoc coalition on the issue; this builds public and political support for global action through iterative processes of public debate, policy dialogue and perhaps pioneering action to demonstrate how the issue can be tackled. Such *global policy networks* have shaped responses to issues as diverse as landmines, poor country debt, climate change, affordable treatment for AIDS and gender. These networks generate a set of cosmopolitan values and norms that transcend national boundaries and spawn operational partnerships for tackling the issues. Hence – like it or not – civil society is as much part of global governance today as governments. To adapt to this new multilateralism, the UN must continue evolving from a rather inward-looking institution to an outward-looking networking organization.

Governments should not see this as threatening. They and CSOs play *different* roles; one is no substitute for the other. Civil society is an arena for policy debate, not decision-making. Yes, it greatly influences governments – where governments truly embrace democracy and civil society has full rights (the three freedoms – of expression, assembly and association). It,

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furthermore, successfully advances citizens' concerns so long as the media is free and objective. CSOs, however, focus on specific causes, not overall political programs; this is both its strength and weakness. Aggregated, civil society presents a huge array of diverse interests, not an alternative governing blueprint. We still need a government to balance the competing demands and construct an overall policy framework.

This analysis led the Panel to suggest that the UN should be guided in its reforms in this area by four key imperatives or paradigm shifts:

### ***Reinterpret Multilateralism to Mean Multi-constituencies***

The way multilateral agendas are shaped has changed – with civil society bringing new issues to the global agenda and governments taking effective actions not by consensus but through multi-constituency coalitions of governments, civil society and others. Increasingly iterative processes of public debate, policy dialogue and pioneering action are the way to redress problems. The UN should explicitly adopt this important mode of multilateralism, and use its convening power to create multi-constituency forums, open formal UN forums to all actors necessary to solve critical issues, and regularize the use of a range of participatory modes such as public hearings.

### ***Realize the Full Power of Partnerships***

*Multi-stakeholder partnerships* have emerged as powerful ways of getting things done and closing the implementation gap by pooling the complementary capacities of diverse actors. Achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other global targets demands a UN that is proactive and strategic in catalyzing new partnerships, incubating emerging ones, and investing in developing necessary staff skills and resources.

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### **Link the Local with the Global**

The deliberative and operational spheres of the UN are separated by a wide gulf, hampering both in all areas from development to security. A closer connection between them is imperative so that local operational work contributes to the global goals and global deliberations are informed by local reality. The UN needs to give priority to enhancing its relationship with civil society at the country level. On the development side this implies prioritizing relations in field offices. On the security side, it means strengthening informal engagement of the Security Council with civil society.

### **Help Tackle Democracy Deficits and Strengthen Global Governance**

The new configurations of the 21<sup>st</sup> century political landscape, described above, pose critical challenges for traditional mechanisms of global governance. They demand changes in the UN not just by engaging civil society in policy-making at all levels, but also by enhancing the role of parliamentarians and local authorities in the deliberative process on pressing global issues.

Box 1 gives a summary of some of the Panel's specific proposals. The full report is available on the Panel's website: [www.un.org/reform/panel.htm](http://www.un.org/reform/panel.htm).

<Box>

### **Key proposals of the Panel of Eminent Persons on Civil Society and UN Relationships**

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. **Shift from a “fixed-slate” approach.** The UN has tended, through its emphasis on admitting to its deliberative processes primarily those NGOs who have been accredited by an inter-governmental committee, to prioritize engagement with a fixed set of NGOs on all issues. Instead it should engage with actors most relevant to the issue in hand (be they NGOs, private sector organizations, local authorities or others). The responsible stakeholder networks focusing on those issues, rather than inter-governmental committees, should determine who speaks and who attends.

. **Establish a new “civil society and partnership tsar”.** A new high-level bureau should be established in the Secretary-General’s office to help create critical mass for enhanced engagement. This would steer the UN’s relations with civil society, parliamentarians, local authorities, the private sector and others – making sure there are appropriate balances between these sectors. It would also catalyze institutional culture changes towards an outward-looking organization.

. **Open the General Assembly (GA) and its committees and special sessions to civil society.** At present, accredited NGOs only have formal rights to engage with the UN’s Economic and Social Committee (ECOSOC). This restriction is historic and no longer defensible. The GA is the over-arching UN forum and hence should also be enriched through carefully structured inputs from CSOs and others.

. **Reform and de-politicize the accreditation processes.** Some accreditation process will still be needed but this should be reformed: a) to allow entry to the GA as well as ECOSOC; b) to emphasize the technical merits of those applying, rather than political factors, and c) to become swifter and more transparent. The Panel-proposed mechanism hinges on a review of applications by a Secretariat body (not as at present by a special inter-governmental committee), drawing on the experience of staff throughout the UN system who work most

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closely with CSOs. Recommendations on accreditation would then be presented in a consolidated report for inter-governmental approval, but specific applications would only be discussed at this level when deemed problematic. This process should be taken up in an existing committee of the GA (probably the General Committee) so that accreditation is not over-emphasized and that it is considered alongside other organizational issues.

**. Enhance the UN Security Council's links with civil society.** It should expand the growing practice of holding informal consultations with CSOs but should broaden this to include CSOs from the affected countries – not just those based in New York. The practice of Security Council “field missions” should be expanded, and these should always include meetings with civil society. Commissions of enquiry after Council-mandated operations should also become the norm, ensuring opportunities for civil society to contribute to these.

**. Strengthen links with parliamentarians:** The UN should convene “global public policy committees” on the most pressing issues to provide a link between Standing Committees relevant to those issues in a wide range of parliaments. As with their national-level counterparts, these would take evidence from a range of experts, forward policy proposals and scrutinize progress on past agreements.

**. Revive multi-constituency forums.** Governments have decided that the big conference has been an overused tool. Perhaps – but it should not be completely abandoned. Used sparingly, it can help foster global norms on emerging policy issues. Smaller, more politically-predictable events – Public Hearings – can also be staged to bring all relevant stakeholders together for reviewing progress on meeting globally-agreed goals, especially the MDGs.

**. Focus at the country-level.** The UN should appoint civil society and partnership specialists at the country level to help UN offices in the country strengthen their engagement.

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**. Establish a fund to enhance southern civil society engagement with the UN and to promote innovations in partnerships.** At present, Northern CSOs dominate processes of engagement with the UN. While many do a good job in representing Southern CSOs, the latter generally want the chance to engage directly. Also at present, while examples of partnerships abound, these are often little more than implementation contracts. Experience shows that more holistic approaches can add much greater value and should be developed fully. To address these challenges requires new sources of “venture funding”, for which a special donor-financed trust fund should be set up.

**<End of Box>**

### **Strengthening the UN’s Response to Conflict**

The Panel urged deepening of the links the Security Council has made in recent years with CSOs. This could be even more important for smaller (non-permanent) Council members, who mostly have few specialist advisors. The object should be to systematize relations and extend them beyond the New York-based CSOs and large international humanitarian NGOs with New York offices, in particular to include more voices from communities who directly experience the security issues focused on by the Council. This requires better planning of meetings with CSOs, providing longer lead-time and providing travel assistance for field-based participants (identified in consultation with the main humanitarian and human rights NGOs and the UN Secretariat). The Panel further urged that the Council more regularly use field missions and ensure that these engage with civil society – perhaps sometimes including a civil society leader in the mission to help interpret the communities’ perception of the issues to Council members.

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The Panel also suggested experimental Council Seminars, on complex upcoming issues.

These would be open to all UN ambassadors, and would receive evidence from expert witnesses (such as Special Rapporteurs and academics). It also suggested that the Council and the Secretary-General initiate independent Commissions of Inquiry after major UN operations under Council mandates (such as the Kosovo Commission). These would both include and take evidence from civil society leaders.

### **The Path Ahead**

The report of the Panel was issued in June 2004. Although most responses from civil society have been positive, others (particularly some of the New York lobbyists) have voiced concerns.<sup>1</sup> In September 2004 the UN Secretary-General issued a response to the Panel's report (UN-SG, 2004) in which he urged Member States to adopt many of the Panel's proposals, including strengthening the dialogue of the Security Council with civil society, and announced a number of measures that he had decided to take, as chief executive, to implement the Panel's proposals. These steps included: establishing a trust fund to enhance the capacity of civil society in developing countries to engage more systematically with the UN; identifying a civil society focal point person in Resident Missions to coordinate the UN system's work and dialogue with civil society at the country level, guided by country-level UN-civil society advisory groups; and opening a Partnership Office in his cabinet to provide institutional leadership in strengthening relations with the full cast of actors important to the UN beyond its formal membership – especially civil society, the private sector, parliamentarians and local authorities.

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The Panel's report and Kofi Annan's response were submitted to the General Assembly. At the time of writing there had been a preliminary Assembly debate (October 4-5, 2004), but no conclusion on those proposals that require Member State approval.

Undoubtedly, the coming years will see a growing role for civil society, the private sector, parliamentarians and local authorities in the UN and other forums of global governance.

However this will not be without controversy. Many in civil society resent the growing clout of large corporations – especially as hard-pressed international organizations increasingly seek funding and operational links with major companies. Similarly, central governments tend to resist the shifting power towards local authorities. Furthermore, as matters of foreign policy come to dominate politics, parliamentarians resent their relatively weak voice in international forums.

The main tension, however, will concern the role of CSOs. As Jody Williams said of the sector, when accepting the Nobel Peace Prize on behalf of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines: “We are a superpower!” It is true. Even the most powerful governments find that CSO pressure forces them to be more accountable and often to moderate their policies and corporate CEOs are routinely challenged to demonstrate “corporate social responsibility”. Superpowers, however, are inevitably resented. The clear ascendancy of policy-oriented CSOs has led to increasingly aggressive challenges from governments, corporations, the establishment media and others. Questions are increasingly asked about who elects the CSOs? To whom are they accountable? How can they prove they speak with authenticity for particular constituencies or on specific issues? What is their level of integrity? Such concerns are certainly surfacing in the debate now underway about the implementation of the Panel's proposals.

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*are not to be ascribed to the World Bank or the UN.*

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[www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org) Amnesty International

[www.wfm.org](http://www.wfm.org) World Federalist Movement

[www.ngocongo.org](http://www.ngocongo.org) Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the UN

[www.wfuna.org](http://www.wfuna.org) World Federation of United Nations Associations

[www.stakeholderforum.org](http://www.stakeholderforum.org) Stakeholder Forum

### **Key sources within the UN**

[www.un.org/reform/panel.htm](http://www.un.org/reform/panel.htm) Website for the Cardoso Panel:

[www.un-ngls.org](http://www.un-ngls.org) UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service

[www.un.org/esa/coordination/ngo](http://www.un.org/esa/coordination/ngo) UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs: NGO

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[www.un.org/dpi/ngosection](http://www.un.org/dpi/ngosection) UN Department of Public Information

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1. Concerns relate to issues such as: a) the proposed shift of NGO accreditation from a special purpose committee of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to the General Committee of the General Assembly could lead to greater control of NGOs by Member States. The Panel proposed this for precisely the opposite reason. A similar approach works well for accreditation to “big conferences”. And if, as the Panel suggested, civil society is granted access to the General Assembly – the principal organ of the UN – not just to ECOSOC, an accreditation process would need to facilitate this. b) the proposed bureau in the Office of the Secretary-General for guiding the UN’s relations with all actors beyond Member States might enhance the access of the private sector and might contaminate UN-CSO relations. This is an outdated concern. Links with the private sector cannot be ignored today (although must be entered with caution). The Panel stressed, however, that such engagement must not be at the expense of its links with CSOs, and does not bestow special access privileges on firms. Hence it suggested that a single office having oversight of the UN’s relations with the whole constellation of potential partners and interlocutors could ensure that all external relations fit an overall strategy, dictated by the needs of the organization and its mission.

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## **5. The War on Terror: Effects on Civil Society Actors in the Field of Conflict**

### **Prevention and Peacebuilding**

*Kevin P Clements\**

*The war on terror and the way in which it is manifesting itself nationally, regionally and globally, is having adverse and deleterious effects on the capacity of civil society organizations all around the world to work with and across a range of political movements (both legitimate and illegitimate) in order to prevent violent conflict and to develop institutional mechanisms that make the resort to terrorist violence less likely. It is important however that the field of conflict prevention and peacebuilding maintains its commitment to a radical humanism and human security is given priority over state security and no-one is dehumanized and demonized on grounds of race, religion or political ideology.*

It was President George W. Bush who – after September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 - declared that he would

*“direct every resource at our command, every means of diplomacy, every tool of intelligence, every instrument of law enforcement, every financial influence and every necessary weapon of war to the disruption and to the defeat of the global terror network”.<sup>1</sup>*

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In other words, terrorism moved right to the top of the United States Foreign and Defense policy agendas and was framed as the “threat to American and world peace”. It was analyzed and interpreted primarily as a military and security issue rather than a criminal problem.

The Security Council on September 12<sup>th</sup> 2001 in Resolution 1368 and again in Resolution 1373 recognized “the inherent right of individual and collective self-defense” as a legitimate response to terrorism. Resolution 1373 was a Charter VII resolution which applied to the whole UN membership and required extremely tough criminal, financial and administrative measures aimed at individual and entities supportive of, or involved in, terrorism.

This resolution and the proclaimed right to self-defense against terror, has resulted in the collapse and conflation of many diverse and different terrorist movements into a single “global terror network” and a rapid expansion of state security institutions - especially intelligence and military institutions. These intelligence and military institutions have generated a difficult environment for a range of humanitarian, human rights and conflict resolution civil society organizations around the world.

In recognition of this difficult environment, Resolution 1373 was balanced by SC Resolution 1456 of January 20, 2003 which instructed member states to ensure “that any measure taken to combat terrorism comply with their obligations under international law [...] In particular international human rights, refugee and humanitarian law”.

According to the Human Rights Watch’s briefing paper from August 10, 2004, the United States and the UN Counter Terrorism Executive Directorate have been more interested in the enhancement of national capacity to counteract terrorism than they have been in ensuring that states are in compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law.<sup>2</sup>

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This has resulted in the application of national counter terrorist laws which have been used against many legitimate democratic and civil society actors.

In Egypt, for example, the Egyptian Government asked the UN to accept a definition of terrorism that was so broad it makes almost any critic of the government susceptible to political repression.<sup>3</sup>

This was also the cases in Uzbekistan, where individuals can be arrested for preparing and distributing material containing “treats to public security and public order” or the creation, direction, or participation in religious extremism, separatism, fundamentalism or other banned organizations!<sup>4</sup>

The Internal Security Act of Malaysia is another piece of legislation which creates a chill over the activities of many legitimate organizations and which makes open and transparent conflict resolution problematic. This piece of legislations has been used for many years to imprison a wide variety of Governmental critics. The Internal Security Act can be used to “detain persons with a view to preventing them from acting in any manner prejudicial to Malaysia’s national security, maintenance of essential services or the economic life of Malaysia or as a preventive measure”<sup>5</sup>

These particular measures are only the most remarkable. The so called right to self-defense against terrorism, for example, has been used by Russia to justify military actions against Chechens; by China to justify coercive action against Moslems in Xinxiang; by the Philippines government against separatist movements in Mindanao and by the Nepalese government against the Maoist insurgency in Nepal. Other states have invoked UN resolution 1373 to justify and heighten internal surveillance and in many instances illegal mistreatment of “aliens”. Conflicts, which in other circumstances might have been viewed as legitimate

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acts of self-determination or resistance against arbitrary and dictatorial rule, have also fallen under the terrorist rubric.

### **Conceptions of Terror**

Before evaluating exactly how the war on terror is having such negative effects it is worthwhile to ask the question of how to define a terrorist. There are high levels of subjectivity in the definition of who is a terrorist or what is a terrorist act. Many of the attempts to define this term have been made in the context of groups that specific governments consider politically threatening rather than in terms of clearly defined or specific terrorist acts. The United Nations, for example, has been unable to develop a satisfactory definition of terrorism even though it has been trying to do so for the last seven years. However the Panel report from High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change describes the elements that a definition of terrorism should include which is a step towards such a definition.<sup>6</sup>

The Oxford English dictionary defines a terrorist as

“Anyone who attempts to further his views by a system of coercive intimidation” as “a member of a clandestine or expatriate organization aiming to coerce an established government by acts of violence against it or its subjects”

The FBI regards terrorism as

“The unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives”.

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Paul Wilkinson in his 1986 book on the subject says

“What distinguishes terrorism from other forms of violence is the deliberate and systematic use of coercive intimidation”.

The British government in its attempt to define terrorism officially in the British Terrorism Act 2000 defines terrorism as

“The use or threat of action where the use or threat is designed to influence the government or to intimidate the public or a section of the public, and the use or threat is made for the purpose of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause. Action falls within the Act if it involves serious violence against a person, involves serious damage to property, endangers a person’s life other than that of the person committing the action, creates a serious risk to the health or safety of the public or a section of the public, or is designed seriously to interfere with or seriously to disrupt an electronic system”.

Rich Rubenstein defines terrorism as follows:

“ Terrorism is violence by small groups claiming to represent massive constituencies and seeking by “heroic” provocative attacks to awaken the masses, redeem their honor , and generate an enemy over reaction that will intensify and expand the struggle”

As Ambassador Philip C Wilcox put it:

“This problem of a definition masks a deeper problem of the need to resolve the grave conflicts that give rise to terrorism. We need an international consensus on definition in order to isolate and eliminate all sympathy and support for terrorism but we can’t reach this

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definition unless we work harder to deal with the underlying conflicts. Let's face reality. So as long as there are weak, oppressed and aggrieved people and groups who can find no redress, there will be terrorism, and what for one man is a terrorist, will continue to be another's freedom fighter. Of course, there will always be terrorists whose causes have no merit and who must be defeated. I do not recommend, however, that we give up trying to win a consensus that terrorism is an unacceptable political weapon under any circumstances. In the search for a more peaceful, humane and civilized world, we need to keep trying to absolutely de-legitimize terrorism in favor of more civilized forms of political action".<sup>7</sup>

Irrespective of what definition is employed it is clear that terrorist threats and acts do have a capacity to induce fear within communities and states. It is important, however, to focus attention on issues of their probability and lethality as well if we are to develop a realistic assessment of the dangers posed by terrorist activity. It is also important that we do not just accept Western definitions of terror. Individuals in a variety of non-Western states have quite different concepts of terror.

There is, for example, the daily existential terror faced by those without food, shelter, or basic security. Then there is the unpredictable terror generated by those who feel powerless and marginalized and who utilize violent tactics against more powerful entities as tools in asymmetric warfare. This is an example of bottom-up terror.

There is pathological terror inflicted to gratify the sadistic or psychopathic inclinations of some severely disturbed individuals.

Then there is the terror inflicted by state systems on their own citizens or the citizens of other countries. When citizens fear arbitrary arrest, torture, imprisonment and death they are experiencing top-down terror. Powerful military machines also generate terror when they

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inflict suffering on innocent civilians in pursuit of military objectives. Each one of these conceptions of terror will generate its own distinctive politics as individuals seek to avoid and or challenge what they perceive to be the sources of their own terror.

### **Good vs. Evil**

The words “terror” and “terrorism” assumed popular currency during the French revolution.

In this context terrorism referred to state sponsored top down efforts to rule and govern through terror. It is important to remember this original understanding of terrorism— as noted above, states can and do terrorize their own citizens and those of other nations when it suits them to do so. If, as many argue, terrorism, is the deliberate targeting of civilian populations for political or ideological purposes then it is clear that states are as likely to engage in terrorist acts as much as non-state actors.

Individuals and political movements that cannot realize their political objectives through non-violent political means will always have violence as an option. The challenge facing the world community and civil society organizations interested in non-violent problem solving, therefore is how to

- . discourage disaffected groups from embracing terrorism, or
- . deny them the means for pursuing such action and
- . stimulate collaborative activities that negate the impact of terrorist activity and ensure the arrest, trial and imprisonment of the perpetrators of terrorist acts?

A broader question has to do with whether the language currently used in the war on terror generates communications that encourages it. Somewhat paradoxically, for example, using military language in response to terrorism tends to disempower civil society actors from

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assuming responsibility for delegitimizing terror and terrorist tactics. Indeed militarized language and military responses to terrorist activities will tend to perpetuate militarized and violent resistance with higher levels of violence and terror .

The war on terror – despite being a contradiction in itself because you can't fight an abstract noun - rests on a division of the world into good and evil, civilized and barbarian, terrorist and counter-terrorist. This divisive discourse generates real problems for those civil society organizations who are much more interested in highlighting connections rather than divisions, bridges rather than fault lines, and inclusive rather than exclusive concepts of community.

### **The End of Soft Power**

From the end of the Cold War until 2001 the world community (as reflected in a wide variety of regional and global institutions) focused considerable attention and energy on “soft power”<sup>8</sup>; on the consolidation of relationships between peoples as well as states; on the development of human as opposed to national security; on collaborative problem solving rather than adversarial competition and on the expansion of international legal and institutional regimes.

One of the most negative consequences of 9/11 and the enunciation of a never-ending war against terror has been a renewed emphasis on state security; on the assertion and application of power and a strengthening of military capacity; on unilateralism and national exceptionalism as opposed to multilateralism and an inclination to focus on the politics of fear rather than the politics of trust. This environment makes it more difficult to reassert the central importance of resilient civil society and state systems. It also makes non-violent humanitarian engagement - both before, during and after violent conflict - more difficult.

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Civil society actors, faced by the prospect of the US and its allies waging a never-ending, unwinnable war against terror have to counter some extremely powerful dynamics in order to focus attention on non-militarized ways of dealing with terrorist acts. Much of the national legislation dealing with terror has resulted in a draconian tightening of immigration laws and procedures, increased use of surveillance mechanisms, infringements of privacy, challenges to civil liberties and the rule of law and a deepened division of the world into “them” and “us”. The fact that most of these measures are not having a particularly positive impact on the incidence of terrorist activity is further cause for concern.

< **Box** >

### **Impact on American civil society**

After September 11, 2004, the U.S. government created the Patriot Act to bolster its security.

The Patriot Act allows for greater surveillance of civilians and civil society groups, and prevents U.S. Americans from interacting with individuals and groups identified by its government as “terrorists”. The Patriot Act has negatively affected the ability of U.S. civil society to mediate or facilitate dialogues between armed groups around the world. Those working in Nepal, Sri Lanka, or the Philippines, for example, can no longer communicate legally with many of the armed rebel groups in their regions because they have been identified as terrorists, and there is no distinction between those the U.S. is fighting, such as Al Qaeda, and those who may be fighting a repressive government in their home country.

Civil society groups also face tight new restrictions in how they receive donations and spend their money, as the Patriot Act aims to ensure that terrorist efforts are not supported through donations to civil society groups. Some civil society actors face personal hardships under the Patriot Act because the Act allows for high levels of surveillance, long detainments without

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charges or legal assistance, and other sanctions on civil society actors such as being listed on “no fly” lists which prevents individuals from traveling by air.

*By Lisa Schirch, associate professor of peacebuilding at Eastern Mennonite University’s*

*Masters in Conflict Transformation Program, The US.*

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### **The Effects on the War on Terrorism**

Just what is the grand plan? Is there any evidence that the declaration of a never-ending war against terrorism and specific wars aimed at regime change in Afghanistan and Iraq are having their intended positive effects or are they an over-reaction to terrorist threat and generating more malign than benign consequences? In particular, what has been its impacts on civil society organizations committed to peace and justice?

Many people feel that the war in Iraq has diverted resources that might have been directed to dealing with the root causes of terrorism and its specific manifestations. It has certainly done huge reputational damage to the United States and its closest allies in Europe and in the Middle East. The war on terrorism and the war in Iraq have also generated a major trans-Atlantic rift.<sup>9</sup>

Second, the US decision to invade Iraq, has resulted in a very significant battering of the United Nations as the legitimate global agency for managing global threats to peace.

Third, the Security Council’s resolution on the right to self-defense has resulted in a wide variety of different countries using the war on terrorism as a means of centralizing power and dramatically challenging the legitimate civil and political rights of individuals, groups and social movements. Thus 9/11 has had far-reaching effects both on national and international

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politics. Most of these effects have neither been beneficial for constitutional democracy or world order.

Despite the manifest failure of military solutions in Iraq and Afghanistan to deliver stability and security, political leadership in the West (especially within the United States, Australia and the UK) remains committed to the privileging of the state security institutions (departments of defense, the military, and intelligence agencies) as the primary and leading response to terrorist and other threats to security. There has been a very deliberate discounting of civil society and civilian police views in favor of official military and security perspectives.<sup>10</sup>

Fourth, articulating differing levels of terrorist threat (especially in the United States) has resulted in a fearful public expressing a willingness to cede some personal liberty in return for an executive promise of security. The re-election victory of President George W. Bush is testimony to the powerfulness of the politics of fear.

This stress on state security has been bolstered and reinforced by a compliant media, extensive and well targeted governmental information campaigns, and the specific privileging of “official” intelligence, executive and administrative perspectives. When the full power of the state is harnessed behind the promotion of military and coercive orientations to security, it is extremely difficult for more pacific, non-state citizen’s voices to be heard. This inevitably has had a slightly chilling effect on proposals and activities that involve civil society and non-military political actors. It has certainly resulted in a marginalization of the concept of human security, which is a concept that addresses both the presenting and underlying problems of terrorist threat with its twin emphases on “freedom from fear” and “freedom from want” .

The monopolization of security discourse by security specialists and the executive branches

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of government has also made it difficult for proponents of a Culture of Peace to make much headway against those whose professions rest on Cultures of Violence.

Fifth, there have been numerous incidents in recent years where civil society actors – promoting human rights or unpopular peace initiatives – have been categorized as “oppositional” or worse “pro-terrorist”. This has led to the arrest and detention of human rights advocates in Liberia, Macedonia, Zimbabwe, Kazakhstan and elsewhere. It has also resulted in secret arrest warrants in the West, prolonged and clandestine detentions, the illegitimate freezing of bank accounts, the closure of radio stations and newspapers and widespread intrusions on individual privacy all around the world. In part such negative activity has resulted from considerable fuzziness about how to define a terrorist but it also flows from the division of the world into an axis of evil and an axis of the virtuous, with the latter able to do whatever it wishes because of its military superiority and more complex notions of manifest destiny and global political leadership (now somewhat under attack because of an inability to deliver peace, stability and development to the violent conflict zones of the world).

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### **An East African perspective**

Kenya and Tanzania suffered simultaneous terrorist attacks in August 1998, and Kenya a repeat attack in November 2002. Following the 1998 attacks, the US attacked Sudan, Kenya's neighbor to the north, accusing it of harboring terrorists. Severally, the “collapsed” state of Somalia has been described as a haven for terrorists. Terrorism, then, in the sense of the indiscriminate use of violence to intimidate or coerce others into a cause, is not far-fetched as far as East Africa is concerned. Nevertheless, the “war on terrorism” does not excite as much

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passion in the region as would be expected in countries that have been attacked. If anything, in the case of Kenya, the excitement has been about the way the government was being pushed around to implement “an American agenda”, and in particular a proposed anti-terrorist legislation

There is a widespread view that the US-led war on terrorism has largely missed the point on the causes and motivations of terrorism. The few voices that were raised soon after September 11, to the effect that the world needed to look more closely to the root causes of terrorist acts, were soon silenced. The thesis of this minority voice seems to be that seeking a solution to the Middle East conflict would nip terrorism in the bud. The dominant voice became the one that said that one should never negotiate with terrorists, that they should instead be eliminated. This dominant voice does not accept the view that there may be a connection between terrorism, on the one hand, and the disenchantment of most of the Arab world with how the Palestinian question has been handled, on the other.

Also, it is noteworthy that terrorism as we know it today did not become real and immediate until after the September 11, 2001 attacks in the US, three years after the devastating attacks in East Africa.

Another concern has to do with the purposes to which a misplaced war on terrorism could be put. Labels are not innocent. They assign meaning and propose or determine actions and practice. If, for example, the government of Uganda insists that the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) is a terrorist organization, this then suggests that the only way of dealing with the LRA is to “crush” them. This makes nonsense of the on-going attempts to resolve the conflict in Northern Uganda through dialogue, following the failure of military solutions for the last eighteen years. Secondly, most of the independent African states were born out of ‘liberation struggles’ led by parties and movements that at one time or another were labeled “terrorist

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organizations". This is certainly the case in Kenya. For a region with such a history it is possible that citizens empathize with those accused of terrorism, especially if there appears to be a history of injustices.

*By George Wachira, Director, Nairobi Peace Initiative (NPI) Nairobi, Kenya*

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### **A Future for Conflict Prevention?**

There are some very specific difficulties facing conflict prevention organizations in the war on terror. Humanitarian groups such as the Quakers, for example, who have delivered both humanitarian assistance, trauma counseling and non-violent dialogical processes to Chechens and Russians in Chechnya, have been banned from doing so under draconian anti-terror legislation. Russian authorities fear that Quaker efforts to analyze and contextualize the conflict would provide solace to their enemies. Similarly in Indonesia, anti-terrorist legislation makes it difficult if not impossible to develop dialogical processes between Jemaah Islamiya and government actors. When the United States or the United Kingdom places specific groups such as the LTTE (Tamil Tigers), Hezbollah or Hamas on their list of proscribed terror organizations, this effectively prevents conflict prevention groups within these countries from communicating with or engaging these movements in problem-solving processes as well. In the United States also there is considerable self-censorship on the part of academics and conflict resolution practitioners about what they say and do on terrorism and counter terrorism for fear of triggering prosecution under the Patriot Act.

Conflict prevention and peacebuilding organizations, therefore, have to work out ways in which they can continue doing their work without falling foul of specific pieces of anti-terror

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legislation. If civil society groups cannot communicate with warring parties, provide safe spaces for difficult discussions and if they cannot help individuals and groups frame and reframe their problems in creative ways, the international community loses enormously important insights into ways in which the needs and interests of terrorists or potential terrorists might be satisfied non-violently.

### **Non-Terrorist Violence**

While the threat may be real, it may also be imagined. For the purposes of terrorist discourse, however, this is immaterial. To challenge such stories it is important to remind ourselves of other equally compelling narratives. The United Nations Development Programme, for example, has some very sobering statistics on violence most of which have nothing to do with terrorism. Every day, for example, more than 30,000 children around the world die of preventable diseases; 2.8 billion of the world's population live on less than two dollar per day with 1.2 billion of them subsisting on less than one dollar. An estimated 815 million people are undernourished. Every year there are 300 million cases of malaria. More than 500,000 women die each year as a result of pregnancy and childbirth.<sup>11</sup> This is the daily existential terror faced by the vast majority of mankind. Against these kinds of statistics those killed in terrorist activity is relatively modest.

In the United States those killed by gun violence each year far exceeds those killed in terrorist activity.

It is important, therefore, that civil society groups working for conflict sensitive development assistance, humanitarian relief and long-term conflict prevention join forces with regional and global organizations in reminding everyone of some of the basic conditions that might generate terrorism. For example, why did so many social scientists not spend more time

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explaining and understanding the unanticipated resurgence of evangelical religiosity in all of the Abrahamic religions? What role does grinding poverty, corrupt and arbitrary governance and the marginalization and exclusion of different peoples play in terrorist activity? How do state systems generate terror for their citizens by politicians and bureaucrats corruptly expropriating public funds or by utilizing state machinery to generate insecurity rather than security for citizens? How do global economic and political dynamics generate higher levels of impoverishment and inequality for the vast majority of the world's population and what role do these play in the determination of global terror?

These matters are as, if not more, important than dealing with shadowy terrorist networks whose *raison d'être* is to generate bottom-up fear instead of workable solutions. To do this effectively requires a robust well funded United Nations that is capable of spearheading regional and global responses to some of these problems. This is not an optional extra and it requires the UN to work out ways in which it can combine the activities of the Security Council, its Counter Terrorism Committee, as well as the Committee on Human Rights and the Human Rights Commission alongside all the diverse development agencies of the UN in order to drain the swamps within which terrorists and terrorist grievances thrive.

### **Critical Years Ahead**

For those groups concerned with conflict prevention, justice and long-term peacebuilding it is vital that we do not succumb to a struggle with wildness in the name of order. On the contrary, it is important that the field of conflict prevention and peacebuilding maintain its commitment to a radical humanism in which no individual or group is dehumanized and demonized. Also, where no one is assumed to be unreachable or incapable of conversation and where - given the right conditions - everyone is capable of engaging in positive

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transactions. In particular it is important that the world is not divided into good and evil, the saved and unsaved, the blessed and the cursed. The next five to ten years are going to be critical for this humanist enterprise.

It is imperative that those of us concerned with generating realistic responses to deal with ruthless enemies, work out ways of identifying and separating the really ruthless from those who have political agendas that are capable of being satisfied with enlightened and well resourced social and economic development policies. For those who are caught in an orgy of violence, the onus on civil society actors is not to capitulate all responsibility for dealing with such people to the security actors alone. Such people require heroic individuals, who are willing to cross boundaries of violence and open up difficult dialogues in an effort to confer respect and humanity on those who are unwilling to do this to others. This is not a task for sissies, but equally it is not a task for the marines either. It is a task for enlightened civil society actors working in concert with politicians and others in conjunction with regional and global organizations. If this does not happen, the prospects for dealing effectively with terrorist violence using existing methods are close to zero.

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### Notes

1 See Edward C Luck, "The US, Counter Terrorism, and the Prospects for a Multilateral Alternative". Chapter 4 in Jane Boulden and Thomas Weiss (eds), *Terrorism and the UN: Before and After September 11<sup>th</sup>*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003.

2 See Human Right Watch Briefing Paper, August 10th, 2004, "Hear No Evil, See no Evil: The UN Security Council's approach to Human Rights Violations in the Global Counter Terrorism Effort".

3 Ibid p.8

4 Ibid p. 9

5 Ibid p. 10

6 "A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility". Report of the High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. A/59/565 Website:  
<http://www.un.org/secureworld/report.pdf>

7 Philip C Wilcox, talk to Conflict Resolution and Prevention Forum February 12 2002, "Defining Terrorism: Is one man's terrorist really another man's freedom fighter" Search for Common Ground, DC.

8 See Joseph Nye, "The Role of Soft Power in the War of Ideas". *Futures Direction International*, July 2004, pp 4-5.

9 See D.Benjamin et al., *The Transatlantic dialogue on Terrorism*. CSIS Washington DC, 2004.

10 See N. Chomsky, *Hegemony or Survival: America's Quest for Global Dominance*. Sydney Allen and Unwin, 2003, pp 6-8

11 See UNDP *Human Development Report 2002*, NY Oxford University Press.

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## 6. People Building Peace: Key messages and essential findings

*\* Paul van Tongeren, Juliette Verhoeven and Jim Wake*

*People Building Peace is an optimistic book. It is full of stories of courage, ingenuity, faith, commitment, persistence, and stubbornness of the best sort. The title has not been gratuitously chosen. These stories are indeed about people who are making a difference. That is one of the most important messages to emerge from this book. It may be true that governments and multi-nationals wield enormous power and take decisions profoundly affecting the lives of ordinary peoples — including decisions about war and peace — but it is nonetheless true that individuals have much to offer to peacebuilding, and individuals working together can often be a powerful force for positive change.<sup>1</sup>*

They can call attention to simmering crises, alert the public and the world to injustice, sway public opinion and even persuade legislators and policymakers to pursue peace and justice.

They can bring together adversaries and bridge chasms thought to be unbridgeable. They can build understanding and help to correct misunderstanding, teach children to celebrate diversity rather than to embrace hatred, and help those children who have been sucked into conflict as victims or as soldiers to build a future colored by hope rather than despair. They can win over hearts and minds to the cause of peace.

That is the optimistic message, but it would be a mistake to presume that just because it can happen it will. Building peace is very hard work, and it requires more than just courage, commitment, ingenuity and good intentions. It also requires, just to mention a few considerations, strategies, methodologies, organizational skills, a good message and a

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capacity for communicating it, and adequate funding to apply to the task at hand. Fortunately, just as the wheel does not need to be re-invented every time a new automobile rolls off the assembly line, conflict resolution does not need to be re-invented with every new initiative. There is much to be learned from the many successes, and even the failures, of those who have taken on the challenge of peacebuilding over the years, around the globe. Peacebuilding is, furthermore, a learning process that is ongoing. In fact, as civil society continues to expand, and more and more people are discovering the possibilities they have to engage in work for positive change, one of the challenges is, increasingly, to keep track of all the good things that are happening so that the knowledge is not lost to future peacebuilders.

Peacebuilding also requires individuals to take the first step. It doesn't happen on its own. It is easy — and tempting — for individuals who are repulsed by depressing images of war and suffering to presume that someone else will take care of the problem. But if everyone presumes someone else will do the job, no one does the job. Peace is everyone's responsibility. There are opportunities at every level and in every sector of society for individuals to take the initiative. Every individual has the capacity to make a personal contribution to the building of a nonviolent society. Indeed, where violent conflict is present, resilient and sustainable peace can only be achieved when actors are operating at all levels — multi-track peacebuilding involving governments and principals to the conflict, NGOs and inter-governmental organizations and agencies, sometimes engaged with the principals and sometimes engaged in work to address the underlying causes of a conflict, and individuals and organizations within civil society focusing on issues, special interests, and key constituencies. And in societies at peace, one of the best guarantees that a society will remain

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at peace is an active civil society where individuals and organizations address — both explicitly and implicitly — the social conditions which can lead to conflict.

As civil society continues to expand, the opportunities for engagement expand as well. Civil society organizations committed to peace have possibilities — in some cases for the first time — to create safe spaces where people can come together to work for peace and to build societies based on justice and the rule of law. Civil society now affords opportunities not just for the more “traditional” political activists, but also for people from across all sectors of society: artists, teachers, students, young people, businessmen and business women, labor union members, academics, environmentalists, journalists, religious leaders and religious lay people; and at every level: local, national, regional, and international.

Just as peacebuilding will not take place if individuals don't take action, it will not succeed without the support and encouragement of others in the world community not directly engaged in conflict resolution work. Individuals, local and national governments, religious institutions — from the local to the global — the business community, NGOs, and international organizations including all of those associated with the United Nations have much to contribute, in assets, knowledge and skills, facilities, equipment, experience, publicity, analysis — and even criticism — and far-reaching networks, to make the work of those trying to build a peaceful future ever more effective. The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) has recently been launched precisely to enhance the role of civil society in conflict prevention and peacebuilding by strengthening civil society networks, promoting an agenda based on a culture of prevention, and bringing this agenda to

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the attention of governments, the international community, and individuals at all levels of civil society.

This chapter highlights some of the most compelling findings that emerged from a review of the 65 cases profiled in these pages. Some of them are “hard” findings — considerations of tactics, organizational requirements, and skills needed for successful peacebuilding work, while others are “soft” — considerations, for example, of how to nurture an environment where conflict resolution can succeed, how to humanize the “other”, and how to build trust between adversaries. These findings are just a selected few among many — a suggestion of the richness of the experiences described in detail in the remainder of the book. Beyond these findings, the stories, taken as a whole, communicate several key messages, which are summarized below:

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### **KEY MESSAGES FROM THE BOOK**

#### **Peacebuilding from below works**

It is not only governments and international organizations that can effectively engage in peacebuilding. This book is testimony to the fact that “peacebuilding from below” can be effective, but this fact is not yet fully recognized or adequately appreciated. It is, therefore, incumbent upon those committed to peacebuilding to convey this message to a wider audience.

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### **Peacebuilding is a learning process**

Although, because every conflict situation is different, there is no blueprint to follow, there is much to learn from the broad range of experiences accumulated in conflict prevention and peacebuilding work. Evaluation and documentation of peacebuilding experiences, and communication among peacebuilders are, accordingly, essential to make certain that the lessons learned are widely available.

### **Peace is everyone's responsibility**

Everyone is capable of building peace. Preventing armed conflict requires a multi-track, inclusive, participatory approach that includes contributions from all sectors of society. Educators, artists, the business community, the religious community, public figures who serve as role models, and private individuals with deep-felt concerns all have both the possibility and the responsibility to act.

### **Civil society organizations are creating safe spaces where people from all sectors of society can come together and work in meaningful way toward a better future**

The potential for positive change is enormous, but the opportunities are, to date, underexploited. Civil society organizations, then, should work to continuously expand this space even further and to mobilize individuals and organizations at all levels of society to engage in the effort to build a global culture of peace

### **Those who are engaged in peacebuilding and conflict prevention work should be empowered, encouraged, and supported in their work**

Peacebuilding requires resources, those engaged in the work need to master a range of

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skills, and both policymakers and the general public need to be informed about the range of initiatives and activities focusing on conflict prevention. The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) is providing such support at all levels, with initiatives at the local and regional levels to share knowledge, collect lessons learned, and develop regional action agendas; at the international level the development and promotion of an global action agenda focusing on conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

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The findings discussed below cover a broad cross-section of peacemaking concerns. Some of them are general observations about effective approaches and important considerations to keep in mind during both planning and implementation of conflict resolution activities.

Others are more specific tips, notes about strategies and tactics, and observations that can help peacebuilders to avoid pitfalls that can undermine a valuable initiative and to enhance their impact. As noted above, there is no blueprint that guarantees success in this challenging work, but good guidance can certainly help to make the work a little bit easier.

### **Individuals can make a big difference**

Many of the most impressive interventions described in this book began as the idea of a single individual, moved by the pain caused by conflict, by an urge to see justice done, by personal experience, or just consumed by a powerful idea. And many of the most successful actions are those of individuals unaffiliated with organizations. The influence of individuals, acting alone or in concert, is frequently underestimated. Whether individuals are writing letters to decision makers, or manifesting themselves collectively in a show of “people power”, the impacts have been shown, on many occasions, to be far reaching.

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One man who has shown what is possible through individual initiative is Datu Paglas, a businessman on the island of Mindanao in the Philippines. Born into a prosperous family, Paglas set aside a portion of his own family's land for a banana plantation, persuaded other landowners to contribute their land as well, and spurred outside investments that have created thousands of jobs and helped to bring the Muslim, Christian and indigenous communities closer together.

### **Multi-track approaches to conflict resolution often improve the chances of success**

Conflicts are almost always decided among officials, but frequently, conflict resolution can be facilitated through unofficial contacts via unofficial channels. Furthermore, governments acting to end conflict without the support of their people risk failure. And however strong the cry may be from the grass roots for an end to conflict, it is almost always up to governments to take the decision that formally ends conflict. It is clear, then, that peacebuilding stands a better chance when, consciously or by accident, multi-track approaches are used, involving official diplomacy at the state level, as well as unofficial interventions at various levels, involving a cross-section of civil society actors.

### **Outsiders can contribute significantly to conflict resolution, but they should be sensitive to their impact on local efforts**

In general, outsiders can best help local and regional conflict prevention activities by creating spaces for local initiatives, providing financial and material support, and otherwise enabling local players and enhancing their capacities. Their presence can also help to increase the safety of local actors. Outsiders need to be sensitive to the fact that, even with the best of intentions, they can sometimes undermine the efforts of local organizations and actors, and

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that because they generally have greater resources available to them, they can easily displace even an established local effort. Outsiders should also respect the judgments of local players regarding the social and political dynamics at play. The long-term objective of increased peace and security should never be secondary to any short-term objectives.

In Urabá, a contested area in northwest Colombia, Peace Brigades International (PBI) maintains a small team of “outsiders” — non-Colombian volunteers who serve as unarmed “bodyguards” to local human rights and community workers. Though not without risk, their presence serves as a deterrent to violence on the part of the combatants. And by offering a modicum of protection in a conflict zone, PBI also helps to create space for human rights workers and community activists.

### **Bridging the divide**

Conflict often involves a breakdown in communication. And where adversaries are unable to talk to each other, it is unlikely that they can resolve their differences. Without communication, the “other” is frequently de-humanized, and mistrust and fear prevail.

Conflict resolution, then, frequently involves finding ways to restore communication and encourage dialogue. This can occur at all levels from the grass roots on up to heads of state. Sometimes the dialogue simply begins when adversaries are in the same room together, and sometimes there are very explicit efforts to get people from opposite sides to address the substantive issues that divide them. Among the activities described in this book are numerous examples of civil society organizations taking an active role in these efforts to work across the divide and encourage communication.

For example, in strife-torn Kashmir, a project called Athwaas (meaning a warm handshake) is breaking through the barriers of mistrust and suspicion by first talking to Muslim, Hindu, and

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Sikh women about their experiences, and then creating safe spaces called “Samanbals” where meetings, dialogue, and joint activities can take place that bridge the divide and facilitate reconciliation.

**There is a need for those engaged in development work to adequately consider the impact that their engagement may have on the conflict situations within the societies in which they are active**

Development may bring improvements in the lives of some citizens within a society, but the benefits of development are not equally distributed. The result is that new resentments may arise when the social dynamic is altered by the process of development, and that already existing conflicts may be aggravated by the perceptions of favoritism towards one or another party to a conflict. Those involved in development work need to be aware of the conflict-sensitive nature of their engagement, and keep the “do no harm” maxim in mind.

The Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) experience in Northern Mali represents an interesting example of a development organization which decided, when faced with a level of conflict which made its original mandate of development work impossible, to shift its focus to conflict resolution/management. NCA interpreted its mandate for humanitarian assistance broadly, and subsequently embraced an approach facilitating dialogue and making available venues and safe structures for interactions between conflicting parties.

**Training programs and workshops can provide an opportunities for participants to learn of conflict prevention skills, informally explore conflict resolution theory, and even, on occasion, to develop concrete proposals for resolving disputes**

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Conflict prevention is complex, and decidedly not always obvious. Organizing skills, communications skills, fundraising skills, and networking skills are just some of the many skills required. An understanding of the conflict dynamics and insight into effective conflict resolution strategies are also essential, as are the development of leadership skills and, in many cases, a knowledge and understanding of the principles of nonviolent action. Several of the cases described in this book involve explicit programs to facilitate skills acquisition, making use of workshops and other training programs.

In one case, involving members of civil society from Ecuador and Peru, very real contributions to a conflict resolution process already underway resulted from a series of workshops organized in parallel to the official diplomatic efforts to resolve longstanding border disputes between Ecuador and Peru. These efforts began in 1997 around the theme “Ecuador and Peru: Towards a Democratic and Cooperative Conflict Resolution Initiative”. The so-called “Grupo Maryland” provided indispensable input to the officials who managed in 1998 to negotiate an end to the conflict.

**Networking gives local organizations leverage, distributes work among like-minded groups, and brings diversity to peacebuilding efforts**

Networking brings like-minded individuals and organizations together to pursue a common set of objectives. Because the human and material resources available to those engaged in conflict prevention are inevitably limited, the sum of the parts working together will likely exceed the capabilities of the separate organizations working independently. There are other benefits as well — greater diversity within the network means a range of perspectives and experiences to bring to both the analysis of the tasks at hand and the actions taken, greater credibility by virtue of a broader base of support, and the engagement of players at different

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levels of society, with expanded access to government, international organizations, and across the various layers of civil society.

A noteworthy example of a successful networking initiative is the Nansen Dialogue Network, which comprises nine multi-ethnic dialogue centers spread across Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo, and Macedonia. The network is working to encourage multi-ethnic dialogue and to provide “space” where it is possible to establish contact and build relationships across ethnic divides among political leaders, young politicians, journalists, academics, educators, government officials, and activists within the NGO community.

**A declaration of commitment issued by respected leaders can be a powerful instrument**

When leaders united behind a cause, the people will often follow. And when leaders from across a divide declare their commitment to put their differences behind them or to seek peaceful ways to resolve them, and when they clearly and unequivocally condemn violence, their statements can have a profound influence on the dynamics of a conflict.

In northern Nigeria, where violence between Christians and Muslims has claimed thousands of lives, twenty senior leaders from the Muslim and Christian communities, have tried to promote a more peaceful climate by issuing the “Kaduna Peace Declaration”. Speaking with the moral authority of their positions as religious leaders, they condemned violence, encouraged mutual respect and trust, and pledged themselves to work for peace.

**Creating safe spaces for self-expression and reconciliation enhance the possibilities for dialogue and the building of trust in situations where fear and mistrust prevail**

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Where there is no contact between members of opposing communities, there is no possibility of reconciliation. Initiatives which carve out a space where people can meet each other and talk about their lives, their needs, their expectations, and their experiences help to break down the barrier of fear and mistrust.

Back in 2000, Christians and Muslims who were engaged in murderous communal violence in Maluku, Indonesia showed no desire to end the fighting, but peace activist Ichsán Malik remained convinced that he could get the two sides to talk to each other. Baku Bae (Reconciliation), the grassroots movement that Malik founded, initially organized meetings away from the scene of the fighting, where it felt safer to engage in dialogue, and later in “neutral zones” between the Muslim and Christian communities.

### **Early warning systems allow for timely intervention**

Most conflicts are preceded by all manner of developments that serve as warning signs of future trouble. Since conflict prevention is invariably preferable to conflict resolution, early warning systems to monitor potential conflict situations can be established. Such systems trigger alerts when events threaten to spin out of control.

Among several examples described in this book is one involving the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK), which has established an early warning system to sound the alarm when information comes to the attention of NCCCK personnel about the threat of a cattle raid — an occurrence which can frequently escalate into inter-communal violence. With a system in place, it has been possible to detect impending raids and other threats to peace and to respond to defuse potentially dangerous situations.

### **Positive visions and positive messages are crucial**

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Where there is violence and conflict, there is often much to criticize, but a steady stream of negative messages quickly loses its impact. Especially in grass roots organizing, where contact with people is essential, it is important to communicate the good as well as the bad, to emphasize positive results, to encourage optimism and enthusiasm, and to embrace positive organizing approaches. Even though the aims of an action may be serious, it isn't necessary to always be serious. With a positive attitude, it's far easier "to keep hope alive", to quote the Rev. Jesse Jackson. Affirming the value of each individual's contributions to a collective effort is also important.

One woman who embodies this positive approach is Emma Kamara, who established the Children's Learning Services (CLS) in Sierra Leone. CLS is a program to nurture both the bodies and the minds of Sierra Leone's children. The philosophy of CLS is not to look back at the dark days of Sierra Leone's conflict, but to take positive action instead to bring hope and restore the dignity of the nation's children.

### **Some of the most effective actions are those that are simple**

Simple actions often highlight one of the most powerful arguments for peace and justice — the essential dignity of all human beings. Often, these simple actions are also cost-effective actions. And simple actions often demonstrate the importance of individuals to the process of conflict prevention and conflict resolution.

After the traumatic war experiences in Croatia following the breakup of Yugoslavia, the Center for Peace Osijek launched the Listening Project in 1999, in order to open a space in the local community for dialogue and communication among its residents. Through "active listening", the Listening Project helped the people of Osijek to better articulate their needs and problems and opened ways for better understanding and reconciliation.

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**Creativity is one of the most valuable resources available to those engaged in conflict resolution**

New isn't always better, but new and different often attracts attention and invites participation. Especially at the grass roots level, there are many examples of how activists use creativity to reach constituencies that are difficult to reach, to engage children in all sorts of activities that impact on violence, tolerance, and conflict, and in some cases, to bring conflicting parties together for meaningful peacebuilding work.

Among the stories told in this volume is the story of Peacelinks, launched by two Sierra Leonean teenagers who returned from an international children's peace in the USA with the idea of looking for productive ways of engaging the skills of other young people. Weekly meetings and singing sessions evolved into a youth organization whose members use the arts to help other young people overcome war trauma, learn new skills and lead productive lives.

**Victim empowerment and transformation**

Victims can be powerful messengers. But the main source of that power derives from their capacity to transcend the emotions of victimhood, to forgive and reconcile, and in so doing, to demonstrate to others that there is a way to the future that is not shrouded in hatred but rather illuminated with hope. Cases in this book which demonstrate how victims have been empowered and transformed into advocates of reconciliation are among the most inspiring in this volume.

In Burundi, an organization called Jamaa — *friends* in Swahili — has been working to persuade young people who have themselves been involved in Burundi's communal violence

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to sit down together and talk of reconciliation. In Jamaa, youth leaders have been told that society will forgive them for what they have done in the past if they take positive actions to build a peaceful society. By reintegrating youths — many of whom have killed in the past — back into society, Jamaa has helped to promote justice and reconciliation within and between their war-torn communities.

**Part of the process of conflict resolution is to transform the perception of the “other” from that of an enemy into that of another human with similar needs, desires, and priorities in life**

The enemy we don't know is a specter without any human qualities. The more that we know about the “others”, the more they seem to be like us, and the less acceptable it is to resort to violence against them. Part of the conflict prevention arsenal, then, includes programs that dispel myths and stereotypes, that humanize the enemy, and show the “other” to be someone who just happens to come from the other side of the divide

Hello Shalom does just that, by allowing Israelis and Palestinians to talk to each other by telephone. The program began when an Israeli woman reached a Palestinian man by dialing a wrong number (he traced her number on his mobile and called her back the next day) but has since resulted in 500,000 telephone conversations between Israelis and Palestinians. By establishing personal but also safe contact, it has helped to put a human face on the “other”.

**Reconciliation**

Reconciliation is not only an effective approach for dealing with post-conflict situations but is also a powerful crisis prevention mechanism. While bitter protagonists may understand, on an intellectual level, the need for reconciliation, it is often more difficult for them to act on

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that understanding and come to terms with the conflict emotionally. Successful reconciliation requires both justice and forgiveness. Reconciliation must address the past so that victims are able overcome their fears and bitterness, but also look to the future so as to give protagonists the opportunity to explore the possibilities of more mutually rewarding relationships. In circumstances where reconciliation is not taking place at the higher echelons of leadership, civil society actors can create momentum for societal reconciliation by starting to work at the grassroots.

In Australia, where thousands of Aboriginal children were forcibly separated from their families, a government-sponsored report recommended that the nation hold a national “Sorry Day” to acknowledge the wrongs done to the indigenous population. The government ignored the recommendation, but the retired judge who had lead the inquiry pushed for its observance nonetheless. On May 26, 1998, the day was commemorated with thousands of events. Many Aboriginals were deeply moved. For the first time, they felt that the Australian community understood what they had gone through. And so, a way was opened towards healing and further acts of reconciliation from both sides.

*\* Paul van Tongeren and Juliette Verhoeven are the editors of this book, Jim Wake is freelance journalist, based in the Netherlands*

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**Note**

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