



**GLOBAL
PARTNERSHIP
FOR THE
PREVENTION
OF ARMED
CONFLICT**

Agents for Change: Civil Society Roles in Preventing War & Building Peace

Catherine Barnes



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Preventing War &

Building Peace

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ABOUT THIS ISSUES PAPER

This paper is the second in a series of studies into issues in conflict prevention and peacebuilding by civil society of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC). This paper is based on the experiences and discussions undertaken through the first three years of the Global Partnership. It builds on the outcomes of regional conferences and action agendas, the global conference ‘From Reaction to Prevention: Civil Society Forging Partnerships to Prevent Violent Conflict and Build Peace’ that took place at the United Nations headquarters in New York in July 2005 and the Global Action Agenda. Furthermore it also advances on the publication People Building- Successful stories of civil society that was published in July 2005. Lastly, it benefits from the insights and practical experiences of the regional initiators of the Global Partnership.

The purpose of the study is to provide an in-depth review of the many roles and functions that can be

undertaken by civil society organizations and it provides an overview of the key challenges facing the wider field of civil society working for peace.

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This study emerges from the experience and discussions undertaken through the first three years of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC). The main focus is to survey many of the ways in which civil society organizations (CSOs) respond constructively to conflict, with the primary purpose of raising awareness of this potential. It starts with a brief description of the wider context of peace and security concerns that GPPAC aims to address. It then gives an overview of what is ‘civil society’ and why it is relevant in addressing conflict. After presenting a framework of the ways in which CSOs respond to conflict, it then provides a more in-depth review of the many roles and functions that can be undertaken by CSOs, illustrating these points with numerous examples. It concludes by identifying some of the key challenges facing the wider field of civil society peacebuilding if it is to maximize this potential and effectively catalyze a new way of responding to conflict that promotes human security in a more just and peaceful world.

The following summarizes some of the key points that are made in arguing the case why it is important for civil society to be involved in responding to conflict and a review of the eight functional areas of civil society peacebuilding described in detail in the paper.

Why should civil society be involved in working with conflict?

The changing nature of war compels civil society to act. The use of unconventional tactics by warring parties has dramatically increased the costs of conflict for ordinary people. Non-combatant civilians are the main targets of violence and civilian deaths are the vast majority of all casualties. 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 feel compelled to use their energy and creativity to find alternatives to violence, to end wars, and prevent them from starting or reoccurring. As people become directly affected by armed conflict, they develop a

central interest in contributing to its resolution. Living alongside the armed actors, they have greater need and greater potential to take part in peacebuilding.

Civil society as a force for people-centered security

In a time when the world is divided in its approach to promoting security, the UN has championed a more holistic approach, as embodied in UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan’s observation that: “The world must advance the causes of security, development and human rights together, otherwise none will succeed. Humanity will not enjoy security without development, it will not enjoy development without security, and it will not enjoy either without respect for human rights.”¹

People can be agents of this security, not merely passive recipients. Fulfilling this potential, however, necessitates changing the state’s ‘security monopoly’: the view that governments are solely responsible for providing security and this can best be achieved through military capacity and the threat of force. Governments have a primary obligation to provide security. Yet in a globalizing world, preventing violent conflict and building sustainable peace requires complex strategies. These need to address structural causes of conflict, many of which may be inherent in the global system. To do so effectively requires cooperation between civil society actors at the local, national, regional and global levels and with governments, inter-governmental organizations and, in some cases, businesses. Yet the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in promoting peace and security remains contested by some, who see them either as irrelevant or as a threat to the sovereign prerogative of states.

Civil society can contribute depth and durability to peacebuilding

Even using the methods of power politics and military intervention, it is extremely difficult to ‘impose’ peace on those who remain committed to achieving their objectives through violence. Sustainable peace cannot be achieved through the exercise of force alone;

¹ *In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All*. Report of the Secretary-General. 21 March 2005. A/59/2005. <http://www.un.org/largerfreedom/contents.htm>.

effective dialogue must be an integral part of any process aimed at truly resolving the conflict. At some point, those involved need to agree the basic terms and conditions in which they will co-exist. It is not possible to make peace without truly engaging with others across the conflict divide. In many cases, the engagement of large segments of the wider society in peacebuilding processes can give depth and durability to the changes needed to support sustainable peace.

One of the greatest strengths civil society bring to working with conflict is their capacity to support changes in how people respond to conflict and to direct attention to the underlying causes that need to be addressed if a sustainable and just peace is to emerge. Furthermore, civil society actors have the potential to play an important role in raising awareness both of the costs of continued conflict and the opportunities and means to seek a way out through constructive engagement with opponents.

While they can facilitate dialogue between the primary protagonists in armed struggle, CSO-led processes are often focused on enabling ordinary people to articulate what they really need and then working to find a common ground from which they can work to establish peaceful co-existence. Instead of the use of force, civil society actors generally rely on their creativity by stimulating a new sense of what is possible and how it can be achieved. This capacity is rooted, ultimately, in a sense of agency: the ability to act together with others to change the world.

Agents for change: key functions of civil society peacebuilding

Civil society responds to conflict in numerous ways. While often part of the forces supporting war, it is also one of the powerful forces promoting peace. CSO roles in humanitarian relief, development and human rights protection are well understood. What is less well known are the myriad ways that they actively build peace. Yet they play roles at every point in the development of conflict and its resolution: from surfacing situations of injustice to preventing violence, from creating

conditions conducive to peace talks to mediating a settlement and working to ensure it is consolidated, from setting a global policy agenda to healing war-scarred psyches. These roles can be mapped out into eight main functions of civil society peacebuilding.

Waging conflict constructively

Sometimes the prevailing power structures in a society are deeply oppressive. While there may not be full scale warfare, life for many is impaired by profound structural violence, often combined with actual or threatened direct violence. Civil society activists can play crucial roles in changing these situations by surfacing the conflict and escalating it nonviolently to bring about necessary changes. Often mobilized by some triggering situation that provokes an ‘enough is enough!’ response, they gather the sparks of resistance throughout the population into a movement capable of challenging the relevant power structures. Sometimes they use existing institutional and legal systems to hold regimes to account or to address injustices. They often combine formal legal strategies with approaches that aim to foster public awareness and the transformation of conflict attitudes and relationships. CSOs can bear witness to violations and undermine the moral authority and legitimacy of abusers. The very act of public disclosure and / or denouncing the situation can make the truth evident in ways that are very difficult to ignore and may empower people to take action to change the situation. This exposure sometimes stimulates conditions that lead to the collapse of regimes over the long term. They can also dissuade the wider public from accepting or participating in acts that enable abuse and oppression.

Conflict is therefore embraced as a way of working proactively toward social change goals and is a feature of the struggle for justice. Civil society activists can manifest both the ‘power to resist’ oppressive forces - typically through mobilizing effective mass movements for change - and the ‘power to expose’ oppression and thereby de-legitimize the authority of the oppressors. Furthermore, they have the ‘power to persuade’ both popular opinion and decision-makers of more constructive ways to respond to specific conflict

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situations and to address the structural problems that give rise to conflict. This points to the importance of channeling conflict through peaceful processes capable of delivering constructive change.

Shifting conflict attitudes: the power to re-frame and change perceptions

Many grassroots peacebuilders in societies locked in protracted conflict promote people-to-people dialogue across the conflict divides to begin to shift entrenched conflict dynamics. This is often facilitated by establishing direct communication between people with some common attribute: such as a similar occupational role (e.g., teachers, journalists), identity characteristics (e.g., women, youth), or common experiences of the conflict (e.g., ex-combatants, policy advisors). The experience of encountering those who have been regarded as enemies and perceiving them as human beings can shake perceptions of ‘the other’ and challenge the discourses of hate. This can shake-up their perceptions of the conflict and ultimately result in personal transformation. They - and those in the circles around them - may begin to seek alternatives to continued war because they now know that there are people in the other community who are similar to themselves in seeking a reasonable solution to the conflict.

Envisioning a better future: power to identify, to analyse and to propose

Civil society actors can help shape peace policy by identifying overlooked problems and policy gaps, analyzing issues and recommending solutions. In short, they can identify the central agenda of issues that need to be addressed in responding to a conflict situation and dealing with peace and security issues more widely. Civil society groups can analyze the situation, formulate recommendations, develop policy options and engage in policy dialogue to address conflicts. They can also mobilize advocacy campaigns to generate political will amongst decision-makers and implement strategies to achieve the desired results. Thus civil society efforts at raising public awareness about a particular set of problems is intertwined with efforts to motivate political decision-makers to take action to address them.

Sustainable peace processes need to be about more than finding ways to end the fighting; attention must also be directed to supporting societies on the path towards a more equitable and peaceful future. In some conflicts, civil society activists have stimulated widespread public deliberation about what kind of society members want to create. This has resulted not only in a ‘blue print’ of the goals for the future but has also helped to reveal the deeper causes of conflict that must be addressed if this aspiration is to be fulfilled. In some cases, these ideas have fed directly into the negotiating agenda for peace talks and proposals for how these issues should best be addressed.

Mobilizing constituencies for peace: generating support and applying pressure

Those involved in armed conflict often justify their actions on the basis of their authority as governments or by claiming to represent popular causes. Civil society actors may challenge these assertions by demonstrating that public opinion rejects military approaches and supports alternatives. Peace media, art projects, concerts, and other creative methods have all been effective in reaching out to the wider public. Sometimes efforts involve mass protests at the use of military force or demonstrations in favor of peace processes. By revealing that there are significant constituencies for peace, they can be a persuasive force in altering the responses of governments and armed groups. This can help to transform social and political dynamics to support atmosphere conducive to peacebuilding and a factor in the viability of a political peace negotiation process.

Yet local people are often unable to address all the dimensions and drivers of conflict on their own. This can be especially challenging when there are severe power imbalances; when there are numerous external parties to the conflict (such as powerful countries allied to one of the armed groups); or where the conflict parties are largely motivated to sustain the benefits derived from the ‘war economy’. In these cases, strategies may well require solidarity and collaboration from key partners elsewhere in the global system. This implies the need for a more systemized approach to

collaboration between the civil society actors with governments and others who have an interest in or influence over the situation. This can be enhanced through coordinated lobbying and raising awareness among domestic and international audiences.

Promoting security: power to reduce violence and promote stability

It is very difficult for people to engage in and support peacemaking when their basic security is threatened. This is one of the reasons why those who want to wreck a peace process escalate violence against civilians. While conventional state security forces can play an important role in protection; too often they are a part of the problem or are simply incapable of fulfilling their responsibilities. Military peacekeepers are often deployed too late, too few or with a mandate that is inadequate to provide sufficient protection of the civilian population. Yet state security forces and internationally-mandated peacekeepers are not the only ones equipped to respond to violence effectively. Violence-affected communities are not merely victims of events. In many cases, they have been able to take action to prevent violence and ameliorate the effects of armed conflict. Community level structures - especially when they work in partnership with authorities and international missions - can monitor developments and take proactive steps to de-escalate violence. In a number of places torn by violence, one of the most effective ways to address this problem is for the community to become proactively involved in trying to prevent the violence by resolving localized disputes and preventing those with specific personal grievances from mobilizing others in conflict. Furthermore, cooperation in helping to achieve mutual security can be a powerful confidence-building measure. This experience can help prepare communities for peaceful co-existence in the wider society.

Power to alert and to act: early warning and early response. People based in a society are often best placed to identify the reasons for a conflict, the motivations of those who are driving it, and to suggest specific actions that could channel it in a more peaceful direction. These insights can support the development of subtle and

highly targeted strategies that do not require extensive resources or coercive measures, especially when addressed at an early point in a conflict cycle. While CSOs can be the source of vital inputs shaping international responses to conflict, it is also vital to stimulate local systems for responding to the risk of violence.

Civilian monitoring. Civil society monitoring initiatives explicitly aimed at supporting peace processes little known. Yet they can be uniquely influential in creating sufficient stability and space needed to underpin official political negotiations and to address the local dimensions of wider conflict contexts. They typically draw upon detailed local knowledge of the specific dynamics and developments that can trigger conflict escalation. Utilizing credible (and usually independent) monitors, they can issue information and analysis that is accepted by the conflict parties and other stakeholders. They often issue recommendations explicitly aimed at fostering confidence building and may work with all involved to see them implemented. Their credibility often stems from the fact that they are perceived as either non-partisan or multi-partisan (e.g., comprised of people with links to all the conflict parties), with the interests and needs of non-combatant civilians their primary concern. In addition to monitoring formally agreed ceasefires, community monitors can become involved in activities that help to generate public confidence, such as monitoring developments in state institutions or relations between communities.

Interpositioning, accompaniment and civilian peacekeeping. Based on the observation that the mere presence of outside witnesses can help to deter violence in many - if not all - contexts, there has been an emergence of unarmed, civil society efforts to reduce political violence and protect civilian noncombatants. Civilian peacekeeping activities include monitoring, protective accompaniment and inter-positioning, i.e., physically positioning themselves between opposing forces to prevent violent attack. Many initiatives are based on using a system of international-local contacts, with foreigners linked to locals to provide a symbolic presence, thereby indicating that the world is watching.

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Success often rests on perception of potential attackers that the foreigners have international linkages. This perception can change their assessment of the ‘costs vs benefits’ that could be gained by attacking. These initiatives can also provide support for local people’s conflict resolution efforts.

Making peace: helping to reach agreement

Negotiations to end armed conflict are often viewed as the exclusive realm of governments and the leaders of armed groups, with concerned governments and IGOs acting as conveners and mediators. The ‘official’ nature of these processes meant that the potential contributions of civil society were overlooked. Numerous civil society peacemaking initiatives since the 1990s, however, have revealed their invaluable potential for supporting the prospects of a sustainable agreement.

Back channel communications and unofficial dialogue. As well as helping to create a climate conducive for talks, civil society actors sometimes have a direct peacemaking role. They can help open channels of communication between parties in conflict. Using their unofficial and low-key status, they can provide confidential ‘back channels’ to convey messages between opponents. CSOs can also facilitate unofficial Track II and Track 1 1/2 dialogue processes, involving those close to government leaders and armed opposition groups. Both methods provide parties the opportunity to engage in the communication necessary to determine whether political negotiations may be viable, build relationships and deepen understanding of the others’ perspectives on the conflict and explore options for its resolution.

Mediating / facilitating peace negotiations. Unofficial civil society actors have also served as the main mediators and facilitators of formal peace negotiations. This role is more typically taken by diplomats from concerned governments or by the UN or regional organizations. These mediators often offer financial resources and, in many cases, bring political pressure to bear on the negotiations. Yet in some circumstances the very fact that civil society-based mediators can offer only their trust-worthiness and skill is a key reason why

they are acceptable when other mediators are rejected. They typically deploy non-coercive and participatory processes to enable those involved to better understand the reasons for the conflict and what needs to be done to resolve it. Instead of relying upon an external force to exert pressure and inducements for the parties to reach an agreement and then supply the resources to help implement it, the parties must instead work jointly through the options until they are able to reach mutually acceptable arrangements. The agreements are then more likely to endure because those involved tend to understand why the compromises were necessary and why the agreement reached is the best one possible.

Public participation in peace negotiations. Yet there are some peace processes where civil society groupings participate directly in the negotiations. Such processes are usually aimed at reaching comprehensive agreements on new state structures and other key issues at the heart of conflict. It is here that civil society can be especially invaluable because they are typically motivated more by the desire to promote sustainable change than by the quest for governing power

Consolidating peace agreements. Conflicts are not transformed by agreements alone; they need a commitment to address ongoing problems through political means. Civil society also plays important roles in helping to sustain agreements reached by the parties, including through raising awareness and educating the public about the agreement itself. They can be crucial for consolidating support. A sense of public ownership of the peace process can be crucial to its durability. 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.

‘Pragmatic peace’: community-level peacemaking Many initiatives - especially those undertaken by civil society peacebuilders - are aimed at peacebuilding at the local community level. Protracted armed conflict within states generally penetrates all levels of society. National

and regional conflicts interconnect with self-sustaining conflict dynamics at the local community level. In some cases, continued violent violence at the community level generates pressure towards greater chaos, undermining efforts at macro-level peacemaking. Conversely, effective conflict prevention and peacemaking locally can underpin macro-level peace processes by creating sufficient stability so that wider political processes towards peace can take hold. This is particularly true when people in other communities see what is being achieved and are inspired to launch their own initiatives.

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. Sometimes they address volatile local dynamics that could escalate into violence and intensify conflict and war in the wider society. Often they are connected to efforts to make a practical difference in the daily lives of people of the community. Sometimes they are able to foster ‘islands of peace’ amidst a wider context of war. Local peace agreements rarely have any formal legal status. They rely on people keeping the commitments they made - often backed by considerable peer pressure by other community members. Yet it is precisely because community members realize that it is in their own self-interest to find a way to live together peacefully that these outcomes can be so durable.

Transforming the causes and consequences of conflict

Addressing the structural causes and consequences of armed conflict. 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. Sustained financial, technical, and political commitments are necessary to transform these conditions. Determined government efforts combined with appropriate international aid is needed to facilitate the rehabilitation of war-affected communities and help ensure that a ‘peace dividend’ is widely experienced. This can be strengthened through the involvement of local and international CSOs in policy analysis as well as program implementation and service delivery.

Ultimately, however, it requires government commitment to policies that will create structures and conditions that are more capable of equitably meeting the needs of all. Civil society can play an important role in generating the political will to shore up this commitment. Yet simply recreating pre-conflict structures - which for many seems the most obvious action after a war - may contribute to prolonging the conflict (or even restarting the violence) rather than solving it. Local civil society, often supported by their international partners, can play a crucial role in promoting this structural transformation over the longer term and in helping to address ongoing conflicts over developmental priorities through peaceful processes.

Demilitarizing minds, healing psyches and fostering reconciliation. While addressing the practical needs is imperative for sustainable peace, transforming conflict-impaired relationships can require even more complex processes that enable people to reclaim their dignity and foster empathy across conflict divides. This may involve parties fully acknowledging their responsibility for abuses they committed and taking steps to address past and continuing injustices. It also requires a shift in the attitudes that enabled and sustained the conflict; a shift from seeing the ‘other’ as enemy -implicitly questioning their membership in the human community - to perceiving them as fellow human beings with whom one can, at a minimum, co-exist. Although such transformation may not be necessary to ensure a formal end to war, the failure to do so can mean that underlying conflict dynamics remain unresolved, potentially creating the seeds for future discord. While governments can - and should - take a leadership role in fostering reconciliation, this involves a transformation of the ‘hearts and minds’ of those who have been touched by the conflict and, as such, cannot be engineered. These changes can be triggered by the authentic initiatives of civil society actors, who rely essentially on creativity to generate experiences that allow people to connect across divides and to spark changes in perceptions. This often involves activating cultural traditions and spiritual resources that touch upon the deepest sources meaning for those affected by conflict. Civil society groups have often found ways of fostering truth-telling processes and

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ensuring that the past is not simply hidden behind a wall of denial. Initiatives can range from documentation projects and academic studies, to theatre and other artistic and literary projects, to memorials and symbolic or ritual expressions of grief, atonement and recognition of those who suffered. All these forms can provide access points that enable people to remember and to engage with the past.

Disarmament, demobilization and re-integration.

Protracted armed conflict tends to militarize significant sections of the affected population. Societies are often saturated with military weapons, as well as with soldiers - sometimes including large numbers of children - whose lives have been shaped by the experience of fighting. A significant factor in the success or failure of DDR processes is the degree to which they are inspired by and respond to the ideas and needs of those involved. Prospects of success are enhanced if weapons collection programs are seen as promoting the interests and needs of community members from which the fighting forces are drawn. Local civil society actors can serve as a kind of lightning rod to elicit and implement appropriate and sustainable strategies.

Transforming values and cultures: educating for peace. Many CSOs aim to address sources of structural violence and to promote human security. 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. They can also play important roles in helping to alleviate social tensions and conflict. They challenge racism, xenophobia and discrimination and promote tolerance and a culture of peace. Person-focused methodologies, such as prejudice reduction workshops and inter-faith dialogue, can complement efforts to address discrimination through policy reform and structural change. Often these initiatives are focused on youth, who may have greater capacities for change than older generations. Summer camps, integrated schools, and exchange programs can all promote what has become known as 'next generation work'. People of all ages can be empowered to address conflicts from the grassroots

upwards. As their knowledge and skills grow, it should become entrenched in the mainstream consciousness. One of the means of doing this is through changing norms and supporting constructive responses to conflict by systematizing peace and conflict resolution education.

Partnerships for peace

In sum, civil society initiatives are often the source for innovative responses to conflict. While civil society as a whole is not necessarily a force for peace, the debates and initiatives cultivated by CSOs are often the motor for it. Their contribution to the underlying transformation of conflict and building peace extends from efforts to support individual development and cultivate positive norms in communities to tackling exclusionary policies, systems and structures that give rise to grievances. Ultimately, a widespread, inclusive and vibrant engagement within civic life can be the incubator for the institutions and habits needed to resolve conflict peacefully and generate more responsive and better governance needed to make peace sustainable.

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 are agreed 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.² 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.

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

² John Paul Lederach. 1997. *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. Washington DC: US Institute of Peace Press.

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 operationalised 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.

I. Conflict, peace & security

Why civil society needs to be at the center of strategies to promote a people-centered paradigm of human security

Governments have primary responsibility to protect civilians and prevent violence. Yet the complexity, scale and diversity of conflict mean that no single entity, on its own, can ensure peace: a comprehensive network of relationships and actions is needed. In this process, civil society can play a critical role in helping to change the root causes of conflict, in working to prevent violence and to protect civilians, in facilitating processes to bring political and social resolution of specific conflicts, and in helping to transform war-torn societies.

Understanding conflict dynamically

Conflict is an inevitable feature of human life and social change. It emerges in response to unmet needs and involves the attempt to satisfy them. Most broadly understood, conflict occurs when two or more ‘parties’ (individuals or groups) have - or believe they have - incompatible goals and when this perception of incompatibility shapes their attitudes and behaviors toward each other. Conflicts occurring at the level of societies or amongst countries or with global movements are extremely complex. The dynamics play out in the perceptions, attitudes and behaviors of all the conflict-affected individuals and groups, as well as the senior decision-makers of the different parties.

Many people think of conflict as intrinsically negative. But conflict typically emerges from real issues and divergent interests, thus revealing underlying problems that need to be addressed to keep the system of relationships dynamic and strong. Conflict often releases considerable energy that can be channeled in many directions by those trying to respond to the situation. 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 to conflict by seeking to avoid it, to suppress it, or by the use of aggression or violence against those they see as creating the problem or blocking their goals. Yet it is possible to work with conflict in a way that enables people to address the causes and to repair relationships that have been weakened by anger, fear and even hatred generated by the experience of conflict.

As will be discussed in greater detail below, conflict can be embraced as a way of working proactively toward social change goals, including through nonviolent direct action. Many development and human rights organizations work to intensify conflict (as distinct from violence) in specific situations so that necessary social and political changes can be negotiated. If proactively addressed through peaceful processes, conflict can lead to stronger relationships, potentially grounded in more equitable and just arrangements. Too often, however, the use of force is perceived as the only viable means to achieve goals.

When tensions escalate into armed conflict, it almost always reflects the break down or underdevelopment of routine systems for managing competing interests and values and the failure to satisfy basic human needs. Efforts to prevent armed conflict therefore necessitate strengthening these systems and making concerted efforts to address needs. While governments have primary responsibility for making these efforts, it is rare that any single entity - whether government, international agency, private enterprise or civil society organization - can address them fully. Effective responses to conflict require multiple entities and actors, including those close to the primary parties in an armed conflict, are mobilized to develop constructive and nonviolent approaches to satisfy conflicting interests and needs.

Compelling reasons to respond to the changing nature of war and violent conflict

Recent decades have witnessed profound changes from the classical model of warfare fought between the armies of states, with soldiers the principle protagonists

and casualties. Although civilians have always been caught up in fighting, non-combatant civilians are increasingly the primary targets of war. The overwhelming majority of armed conflicts are intra-state (although intra-state conflicts often have regional or international dimensions, thus challenging the classifications 'internal' and 'external'). Some are characterized by multiple armed groups and multiple grievances. Many are noteworthy for their localized nature, with intense struggles often confined to a region of the country. (This may be because its people want independence and / or because a concentration of natural resources sparks competition for control.)³

Furthermore, the use of unconventional tactics by warring parties has dramatically increased the costs of conflict for ordinary people. Non-combatant civilians are the main targets of violence and civilian deaths are estimated to count for approximately 75 percent of all casualties.⁴ 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. As Celia McKeon explains:

“The nature of internal conflict in the post-Cold War era provides the most compelling argument for the participation of civil society in peace processes. ... Individual citizens, the family and the community are violated, coerced and subverted as part of the political, economic, and sociocultural strategies of the armed actors. This is the frontline of modern warfare. As people become directly affected by armed conflict, they develop a central interest in contributing to its resolution. Living alongside the armed actors, they have greater need and greater potential to take part in peacemaking efforts. ... Certainly the leverage exercised by an acceptable governmental or UN representative can have a significant impact on the prospects for agreement.

However, in situations of protracted internal conflict, violence often penetrates through the social fabric, involving a larger array of armed actors (often with differing levels of autonomy and accountability), as well as a complex tapestry of interconnected and self-sustaining conflict dynamics at the community level.”⁵

Simultaneous to this localized dimension of armed conflict, modern warfare tends to be intertwined with the dynamics of globalization. One facet of globalization is increasing interdependence, whereby events occurring in any part of the world affect other parts of the global system - either directly or in terms of perceptions.

According to Mary Kaldor⁶, the change processes associated with globalization are breaking up the cultural and socio-economic divisions that defined politics in previous periods. New forms of struggle may appear to resemble traditional nationalism or communalism but are rooted in contemporary conditions - often taking advantage of multiple transnational connections - and display new characteristics. Although the 'new wars' have a political content, she observes that they blur the distinctions between war, organized crime (violence undertaken by privately organized groups for private purposes, usually financial gain), and large-scale human rights violations in which non-combatant civilians are often a primary target.

At a structural level, globalization has intensified the grievances that leave societies vulnerable to conflict. Many have observed that economic globalization simultaneous brings economic growth in some places

3 SIPRI Yearbook 2005: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security. Stockholm: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. <http://www.sipri.org>.

4 Report of the UN Secretary-General to the Security Council on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict (S/2001/331), available <http://www/un.org>.

5 Celia McKeon. 2005. "Civil Society: Participating in Peace Processes" in van Tongeren, et al., *People Building Peace II*, op.cit., p.567

6 Mary Kaldor. 1999. *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

I. Conflict, peace & security

while weakening economies and whole states in others. In many cases, pre-existing inequalities have widened, so that those who were already strong in the marketplace have been able to accumulate proportionately more wealth, whereas those who were already in positions of economic vulnerability have experienced intensified exclusion. This widely understood as a significant root cause of conflict, although many observe that the conflict is most likely to be expressed in violent revolts when people feel frustrated in their expectations rather than simply 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

7 Mark Duffield observes that during the so-called 'Cold War' period, the 'superpowers' provided significant material and political support to governments and insurgencies in the global South in ways that maintained the balance of power between them. This support mostly dried up between the mid-1980s and the 1990s, which meant that warring parties had to become self-provisioning. See: "War as a Network Enterprise: The New Security Terrain and its Implications" *Cultural Values*, 2002, 6(1&2): 153-165.

8 The Center on International Cooperation at New York University has a project aiming to explore these dynamics more fully. As they observe: "Regional conflict formations (RCFs) are sets of transnational conflicts that form mutually reinforcing linkages with each other throughout a region, making for more protracted and obdurate conflicts. ... RCFs present formidable obstacles to peace efforts by the international community, but though a few studies have noted their prevalence, few have analyzed their dynamics and challenges for policy. Conventional approaches to human rights, based on the responsibility of states or state-territorial jurisdictions, may also encounter obstacles. Regional strategies are unavoidable, as regional powers are likely to be involved, and global powers may have little interest in devoting resources to distant problems. But regional parties to the conflict may be ill suited to take on the lead role in a peace process (due to lack of capacity or impartiality), and regional organizations may be paralyzed by dissension among their members. This conundrum is reflected in differences between the perspectives of analysts and actors living in these regions and those in global organizations or dominant states outside the region. The latter tend to focus on sources of conflict within the states or regions themselves and (if they are globalist liberals rather than nationalist unilateralists) propose ameliorative interventions by external actors. Those in the regions often attribute their problems in large measure to the policies of more powerful states and institutions and focus on the capacities of their own regions to confront these problems. Regional actors may lack economic or military capacity, but they possess knowledge and political skills that more distant actors may lack. Furthermore they have no 'exit strategy' and are thus key to sustainability." Quotation from: http://www.cic.nyu.edu/conflict/conflict_project6.html

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 drugs, to weapons, to human beings. It has also enabled armed groups to become self-provisioning by linking the local resources they control to global networks.⁷ Thus globalization enables 'war economies' through illicit money flows, smuggled arms and contraband, diaspora communities and information exchange, 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.

One expression of these dynamics is the fact that armed conflict is increasingly assuming a sub-regional dimension, what Barnett Rubin terms 'regional conflict formations'.⁸ There may be a regional dimension to the causal factors generating conflict. These can include long-standing demographic patterns of ethno-national and indigenous peoples divided by state borders, as well as newer structural factors created by the fall-out from economic globalisation and power asymmetries. The symptoms of conflict also resonate throughout the region, with increased trafficking, refugee flows, cross-border military movements that can destabilize neighboring states. Addressing these factors systematically requires strategies based on an integrated approach.

These dynamics present profound challenges for those in civil society committed to preventing armed conflict. As will be discussed in the next chapter, global civil society networks have been effective in mounting campaigns to address some of the systemic root causes and factors that exacerbate conflict. Yet CSOs are only at the beginning of learning how best to address the factors that enable the 'war economies' that can fuel protracted violence.⁹ Furthermore, cross-border networks between peacebuilding CSOs have tended to be weak in most regions prone to conflict. This has inhibited the potential to cooperate on addressing the cross-border dimensions of conflict and to build more resilient societies.

There are also implications for the ways in which state actors and international institutions are responding and helping to cause or sustain these wars. These debates have intensified since the events of 11 September 2001 and the subsequent US declaration of a 'war on terror'. Few, if any, societies have been untouched by these developments and they have perhaps been particularly influential on those already experiencing armed conflict. This development further underscores the importance of the global dimension of conflict - and of its transformation.

People-centered human security: working proactively for just peace

Ultimately, the quest for equitable and just human security is at the centre of GPPAC's motivation and is understood as the key to preventing both armed conflict in specific societies as well as transforming the wider conditions that give rise to it globally. The goal is to promote the security of people: their physical safety; their socio-economic well-being; respect for their dignity and political and cultural identity as individuals and as members of communities; gender equality; and the protection and promotion of all human rights - including women's rights - and fundamental freedoms in the home, in the community, in their country and in the wider world. Accompanying this aspiration is the belief that the sustainable security of states can only be based on the security of people. This vision of human security can lead to a shift from a security paradigm based on the balance of power and military alliances to one based on mutual interdependence and cooperation. It is a re-orientation from a state-centered to a people-centered approach.

In a time when the world appears divided in its approach to promoting security, the UN has championed

a more holistic approach, as embodied in UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's observation that: "The world must advance the causes of security, development and human rights together, otherwise none will succeed. Humanity will not enjoy security without development, it will not enjoy development without security, and it will not enjoy either without respect for human rights."⁹

GPPAC's vision for a more secure world is based on the assumption that people - especially when organized - can be agents of this security, not merely passive recipients. Recognition and fulfillment of this potential, however, necessitates changing the assumption of the state's 'security monopoly'. This is the view that governments are solely responsible for providing security to the state's inhabitants; and that security can best be achieved through weapons and institutions largely reliant on the threat of force. While the provision of security is a primary obligation of governments, activating people through civil society institutions may well be key to fulfilling a more cooperatively-based foundation for human security that is more sustainable and equitable. Yet the role of CSOs in promoting peace and security remains highly contested by some, who see them either as irrelevant or as a threat to the sovereign prerogative of states.

9 For example, the UK-based NGO Global Witness - working in coalition with other international and domestic NGOs - has been at the forefront of campaigns to expose the exploitation of natural resources and funding armed conflict. This has included the exploitation of timber in Cambodia, Liberia, and Burma; the global diamond trade funding conflict in Angola, Sierra Leone and DRC; and the oil industry in Angola. See <http://www.globalwitness.org>

10 *In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All*. Report of the Secretary-General. 21 March 2005. A/59/2005. <http://www.un.org/largerfreedom/contents.htm> A debate of these ideas was a focus of the High-Level Summit to review the Millennium Declaration in September 2005.

II. Civil society, conflict and change

What is civil society? ¹¹

‘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. Civil society therefore involves 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, broadly understood. Some would contest the inclusion of some of these groupings as a part of civil society,

¹¹ The following section is based on Catherine Barnes. 2005. “Weaving the Web: Civil-Society Roles in Working with Conflict and Building Peace” in Van Tongeren, Paul, Malin Brenk, Marte Hellema, and Juliette Verhoeven, Eds. *People Building Peace II: Successful Stories of Civil Society*. Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner.



Figure 1: Civil Society - Diverse Sectoral & Organizational Forms

more narrowly defined. Yet all have played important roles in responding to conflict. What becomes clear is that civil society is far more than public benefit non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Yet NGOs with technical-professional skills play an important role in providing services, promoting change and working with conflict.

There are significant variations in how theorists define civil society and view its functions.¹² 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' or 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 'civic' values and processes for citizens to engage in public life by channeling their interests and aspirations through peaceful deliberative processes. In democracies, 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 other forms of policy dialogue, and even through direct displays of power via protest movements and activism. Furthermore, civil society groups can help to 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 state run by democratic governments that ensures the rule of law. If these conditions are not present, people - through civil society organizing - strive to create the elements of self-governance and security, as has been seen in parts of Somalia and in some of the 'zones of peace' communities from the Philippines to Colombia, amongst others. In so doing, they 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.

Civil society as a factor in war as well as a force for peace

Most people, most of the time, do not want to be a part of wide-scale violence. Many will, however, participate when they do not see alternatives or are so inflamed with a burning sense of injustice that violence is considered a necessary remedy. In these cases, there are civil society actors who are 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.

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

¹² See, for example John Burbidge, Ed. 1997. *Beyond Prince and Merchant: Citizen Participation and the Rise of Civil Society*. (Brussels: Institute of Cultural Affairs International)

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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 - often executed through civic and 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. Most would argue that 'armed groups' are not a part of civil society *per se*. Yet these groups are usually 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.¹³

Within any society, civil society is a potentially powerful force that can mobilize either to escalate conflict or facilitate its resolution. Ultimately, the state belongs to its people. Civil society engagement in addressing problems that could generate conflict strengthens long-term social and political development of the country. Conversely, 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. If the diverse elements within a society feel that the 'solutions' are legitimate,

they are more likely to take responsibility for implementing them.

Globalization and civil society: evolving trends

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 working on development. It was also a response to initiatives of donor agencies aspiring to support the development of this independent space within societies in transition from various forms of authoritarian rule.

In recent years, there has been a rapid expansion in CSOs explicitly aimed at working with conflict. The significance of civil society in general and its role in conflict in particular has been recognized by the United Nations in recent reports and resolutions.¹⁴

Civil society and global governance

Throughout the 1990s, the major UN 'world conferences' on key thematic topics created both regional and global forums for dialogue and deliberation of important policies and principles. They also opened space for the development of transnational networks among CSOs for the exchange of information, ideas, and strategies. This generated opportunities for campaigning on common concerns. Those involved learned how policy gets made at the national and international levels and became increasingly confident participating in the process. The net effect of these

¹³ For example, Varshney argues that a key variable in why some inter-group conflicts become violent while others do not is the strength or weakness of inter-communal civil society. If members of different groups have regular means of interacting with each other and participate in common institutions or other common spaces, the risks of violence are greatly reduced even if conflict dynamics continue. (Ashutosh Varshney, 2002. *Ethnic conflict and civic life: Hindus and Muslims in India*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press.) His observations are consistent with Lewis Coser's earlier ones on the function of cross-cutting ties in ameliorating the potential for violent conflict. (Lewis Coser, 1956. *The Functions of Social Conflict*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.)

¹⁴ The Secretary-General in his 2001 report on the Prevention of Armed Conflict (S/2001/574) stressed: "the primary responsibility for conflict prevention rests with national Governments, with civil society playing an important role." These principles were supported by both the Security Council and the General Assembly through resolutions on this theme: UN Security Council Resolution 1366 (2001); United Nations General Assembly Resolution 57/337 (2003).

developments in the ‘conference decade’ was an important factor in creating a public realm at the global level, where civil society voices could shape agendas internationally in much the same way as they had done domestically in many countries.¹⁵ The UN responded by expanding opportunities both for traditional consultation and new forms of partnership and operational cooperation.

Finding a voice: civil society and the new media

There has been a close relationship between the growth in civil society voices on the global scene and the opening of global media channels - including the ‘new media’ enabled by the internet. The media has often been crucial in providing a channel for the voices and perspectives of CSO actors, thus creating a complex and interdependent relationship between many CSO campaigners and the media people who turn to them for information, analysis, ideas and stories. The voice of civil society campaigners in the media connects to a longer-term shift of communications in the public sphere away from formal societal institutions as the source and site for information and discussion to the media system, with correspondingly important implications for governance and democratic politics.

Globalization and regionalization

Globalization has enabled and been strengthened by the burgeoning growth in international civil society. As Serbin¹⁶ points out, the processes of globalization have enabled actors at all levels - subnational, national, regional, transnational and international - to increasingly assert influence globally. At the same time, globalization has triggered ‘regionalization’. This is a trend for governments and civil society to engage at local and regional levels to address common sources of perceived vulnerability by strengthening regional identity, regional norms and pragmatic mechanisms for cooperation. This has manifested through increasingly strong regional organizations, like the European Union or the Organization of American States and the African Union.

Serbin argues that this regionalism is crucial to pluralism and cultural diversity, by strengthening

distinct perspectives rooted in a regional context. Ideally, regional institutional structures can be mobilized to form policies and practices appropriate to specific cultural, social and geopolitical needs. At the same time, the linkages between civil society initiatives at the regional and global levels can create new synergies with the potential to overcome the ‘democratic deficits’ inherent in international processes. Consequently, regional civil society networks are forming both to collaborate on achieving specific changes through campaigning and other advocacy, as well as around ongoing shared identity or thematic concerns.

Promoting an global agenda for change

The emergence of civil society actors as a significant voice is considered by many to be one of the major new developments in international relations over the past century. The emergence of ‘global civil society’ has been enabled by the growth of communications technology. Yet many believe that the reason for its proliferation is a reaction to the failure of governments to respond effectively to cross-cutting problems (such as the environment), a growing sense of concern for the situation of people elsewhere (as witnessed in the human rights movement), and a feeling 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 the growing inequality of power, as well as a discrepancy between economics and governance, in which increasingly interdependent markets remain unchecked by effective global mechanisms for regulation.

15 As Fernando Henrique Cardoso has argued, this has helped to shape the ideal of “a world order that is not based on the uncontested will of sovereign states but on universally agreed principles and norms...[in which] individuals were acknowledged as subjects not only of national law but also of cosmopolitan rules, enforceable by transnational institutions.” “Civil Society and Global Governance” Contextual paper prepared by the Panel’s Chairman Fernando Henrique Cardoso for the United Nations High-Level Panel on UN-Civil Society, 2003

16 Serbin, Andrés. 2005. “Effective Regional Networks and Partnerships” in van Tongeren et al, Eds. *People Building Peace II: Successful Stories of Civil Society*. Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

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As many of these issues are related to the structural causes of conflict, these developments have intersected with the growth of the conflict prevention discourse and have been taken up by some CSOs with a conflict prevention remit. In a globalizing world, preventing violent conflict and building sustainable peace requires complex strategies. These need to address structural causes of conflict, many of which may be inherent in the global system. To do so effectively requires cooperation between civil society actors at the local, national, regional and global levels and with governments, inter-governmental organizations (IGOs) and, in some cases, businesses.

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 new responses to key structural problems.¹⁷ Although CSOs have not been able to draw on the legal, political or military power of states, they have been able to draw on the power of what some theorists refer to as 'discursive legitimacy' rooted in their analysis of the problems, the moral 'voice' that they bring to identifying solutions, and the perception that they have the support of large numbers of people who want change. As will be explored in greater detail in Chapter V, CSOs have been crucial in mobilizing campaigns for specific policy changes in the conduct of war (such as banning landmines) as well as to address structural factors in the global system that can generate conflict (such as unfair trade policies and practices) and in protesting the pursuit of war itself.

Yet there are substantive differences within global civil society related to political perspectives and strategic choices. These can be categorized roughly into those who (a) promote stability / the status quo, (b) those who promote reform, and (c) radicals who focus on profound system change, some of whom chose to avoid engaging with existing institutions and official decision-making forums. In short, there is scope for considerable levels of conflict within civil society at all levels - although it has mostly been addressed through constructive debate rather than debilitating violence.

Whose agenda?: power asymmetries, representation and accountability

Unsurprisingly, problems have surfaced.¹⁸ One serious critique relates to the persistent imbalances between those in the 'centre' and those in the 'periphery' of access to resources and power. This dynamic plays out in terms of who is able to create the 'agenda' for what is to be addressed 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 Northern / Western groups have tended to impose demands on Southern / Eastern governments (e.g., through advocating conditionality and sanctions) in ways that might compromise sovereignty and paradoxically undermine democratic processes and local civil society in those countries. They worry that externally imposed prescriptions on national policy undermine local capacities to address central challenges in their society by both weakening sovereignty and making the government more accountable to external forces (especially international financial institutions and powerful foreign governments) than to the domestic population. For example, some are concerned that the tendency of Northern-based INGOs to shift debates on structural issues away from national parliaments (which can help to strengthen the accountability of governments) to international forums organized around multilateral agencies and inter-governmental meetings. International forums tend to be inaccessible to less wealthy CSOs, especially those in the global South and for those with less experience or language skills for effective participation. Some feel that focusing on multilaterals is a 'soft target' when the real decision-

17 See, for example, Clark, John D. 2003. *Worlds Apart: Civil Society and the Battle for Ethical Globalisation*. Bloomfield CT: Kumarian Press, Inc.

18 See, for example, John Clark (2003) and Smillie, Ian and Henny Helmich, Eds. 1999. *Stakeholders: Government-NGO Partnerships for International Development*. (London: Earthscan).

making power lies with governments. Furthermore 'internationalizing' concern on specific issues / projects can lead to a distortion of the complexities and needs of those directly affected as the situation is filtered through the lens and linked with the concerns of those in far-away places. This further strengthens the perception of well-established Northern CSOs facilitating the institutional spread of their own values and goals without reference to the values and perceptions of their counterparts elsewhere in the world.

These dynamics appear to slowly be shifting as CSOs based in the global South / East increasingly create their own networks and articulate strong social change agendas, winning support for their causes. Yet some observe a parallel dynamic of center-periphery relations at the domestic level, with elites (often urban and upper middle class) speaking 'on behalf' of marginalized sections of the population in their own country. These dynamics are not only stemming from centre-periphery relations globally, they are also manifest along other social divides, such as faith, gender, culture, generation...

In addition to divergence and critiques from within CSO circles, there have been negative reactions from some governments to the growth in CSOs' influence in international affairs. Some have resisted efforts by intergovernmental organizations to more actively involve CSOs in deliberative processes and through consultation on policy formation and planning. Some see engaging 'unaccountable' CSOs in policy deliberation as undermining the authority of parliamentary democracy - particularly in countries where parliaments are not as institutionally strong or well-rooted. Some associate greater civil society influence with efforts to undermine their sovereignty. (Although this criticism does not appear to have been as sharp with regard to consulting private sector actors such as business leaders.) There is also concern about the potential to widen the power imbalances in the

global system, given the unequal resources and opportunities amongst CSO actors.

Within the UN system, there is a growing perception that the increased complexity of relations with CSOs has strained the existing arrangements for facilitating interaction with non-state actors. This has sparked a review of existing practice in order to recommend reforms that will lead to greater consistency and coherence in the 'rules of engagement' with civil society. The radicalization of the 'anti-globalization movement', which has been manifest in violent protest (usually side-by-side with protestors committed to non-violent direct action) and their tendency to target intergovernmental / multilateral organizations has strengthened the urge to reconsider participation by non-governmental actors in international policy forums. Thus at the same time as CSOs have become more effective in efforts to shape policy and practice, there has been an increasingly strident challenge to their right and legitimacy in doing so. However, as argued by Fernando Henrique Cardoso:

"In a complex world, the answer to the question 'who speaks for whom' calls for new perspectives. The legitimacy of civil society organisations derives from what they do and not from whom they represent or from any kind of external mandate. In the final analysis, they are what they do. The power of civil society is a soft one. It is their capacity to argue, to propose, to experiment, to denounce, to be exemplary. It is not the power to decide. Such legitimacy is, by definition, a work in progress. It is never attained once and for all. It is gained in the arena of public debate and must be continually renewed and revitalized."¹⁹

¹⁹ Fernando Henrique Cardoso. "Civil Society and Global Governance" Contextual Paper for UN High-Level Panel on UN-Civil Society Relations. Online: www.geneva2003.org/wsis/documents/Cardoso_paper.doc

III. Why civil society involvement in prevention & peacebuilding?

“Without passion, nothing happens; but without compassion, the wrong things happen.” - Former UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld

Conflict dynamics are generated by the interacting responses of individuals to the situations they confront. Conflict is therefore shaped fundamentally by human agency. Because of this quality, conflicts can be more susceptible to change than other sorts of structural and environmental conditions that generate stress in social systems - even though change may seem elusive where conflict has become seemingly intractable. While the use of force and other coercive strategies can push the protagonists in a conflict to behave in certain ways for a period of time, coercion on its own is unlikely to resolve the conflict. In fact, it can make violent conflict more likely and even become endemic in a society.²⁰

To foster conflict transformation, it is important to change the attitudes and behaviors that perpetuate conflict relationships and to develop mutually acceptable strategies to address the main conflict issues. This ultimately involves working to effect changes in people - although changes in structural conditions are also necessary over a longer term for a more comprehensive ‘positive’ peace that addresses structural violence.²¹ This comment is made in full recognition that people and structures interact dynamically over time - e.g., people change structures and structural conditions create constraints and opportunities that shape the people affected by them.

Because the process of changing conflict dynamics is entwined with supporting changes in people, it seems that there are several fundamental assumptions that can be made about working with violent conflict in societies:

- Sustainable peace cannot be achieved through the exercise of force alone; effective dialogue must be an integral part of any peace process aimed at truly resolving the conflict. At some point, those involved need to agree the basic terms and conditions through which they will co-exist.
- It is not possible to make peace by peaceful means without truly engaging with others across the conflict divide. As Nelson Mandela eloquently advised those in the Northern Ireland peace process: *“You cannot make peace by talking to your friends; you can only make peace by talking with your enemies.”*²²
- While engagement is essential, the means through which engagement takes place can make the difference between fostering peaceful change vs. further exacerbating conflict, as well as injustice. Therefore process matters and can shape outcomes.
- In many cases, the engagement of large segments of the wider society in peacebuilding processes can give

²⁰ For example, empirical research by Gurr and Harff demonstrates that ethnopolitical conflicts are likely when a people identifies strongly with their ethnic community and live in an autocratic political system that has used discrimination and intermittent violence to repress ethnic peoples, particularly if the group has traditional leaders that enjoy support from international allies. Their research also shows that in non-democratic political environments, violence is more likely to be used to quell protest - a strategy which in turn increases the likelihood that the challenging group will respond with increased violence. They note, however, that when state authorities use extreme force, such as massacres, widespread torture, and genocide, they are less likely to be challenged. This is because the groups either cannot organize open resistance or fear the consequences of doing so. Nevertheless, it appears that when the strategic balance changes again, those oppressed resurface in rebellion with intensified grievances. See Ted Robert Gurr and Barbara Harff. 1994. *Ethnic Conflict in World Politics*. Boulder: Westview Press.

²¹ Galtung articulated the distinction between ‘negative peace’ (the absence of war) and ‘positive peace’ (based on just relationships, where basic needs are fulfilled). These ideas are connected to his distinction between three inter-related forms of violence. ‘Direct violence’ refers to direct assaults upon bodily integrity through killing, wounding, rape, explicit denial of physical resources needed for survival, and so on. ‘Structural violence’ refers to conditions that both jeopardize bodily integrity - such as poverty, repression and other forms of exploitation - as well as denial of other basic human needs for identity and security. ‘Cultural violence’ refers to those aspects of our meaning systems - especially those gathered in religion, political ideologies, science, art, and media more generally - that legitimize direct and structural violence and perpetuates militarism. See: Johan Galtung. 1969. “Violence, peace and peace research” *Journal of Peace Research*, vol 6 no 3: 167-191)

²² Quoted in Harris, Peter and Ben Reilly, Eds. 1998. *Democracy and Deep-Rooted Conflict: Options for Negotiators*. International IDEA Handbook Series. Stockholm: International IDEA.

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depth and durability to the changes needed to support sustainable peace.

Even using the methods of power politics and military intervention, it is extremely difficult to ‘impose’ peace on those who remain committed to achieving their objectives through violence. Sustainable peace processes are instead driven by the realization of the unsustainability of continued armed conflict.²³ Early in a conflict, militants tend to believe that they can prevail in their demands either by using force or by threatening to use force. They do not generally consider the interests or needs of their opponents or others. Yet as the costs of conflict become increasingly painful, at least some elements within the leadership and the constituency may increasingly realize that they are unlikely to get what they want through unilateral action. As they understand that their future is inter-dependent with their opponents, the disputants are more likely to recognize the need to engage cooperatively with their opponents - even if this means that some goals will need to be abandoned. This creates an incentive for cooperation, even at the same time as competition continues. This combined awareness of inter-dependence and that the fighting is ultimately unsustainable helps to commit leaders of conflict groups to the process for reaching a negotiated settlement and then to fulfill their commitments under the agreements.

It is clear that civil society actors alone are seldom - if ever - able to transform a wider situation of violent conflict. Yet it also seems that it is very difficult, if not impossible, for governments and inter-governmental organizations to foster a durable ‘positive peace’ without the engagement of the wider population in the conflict affected society. As will be described throughout the next chapter, one of the greatest strengths civil society organizations bring to working with conflict is precisely their capacity to support changes in how people respond to conflict and to direct attention to the underlying causes of conflict that need to be addressed if a sustainable and just peace is to be supported. Furthermore, civil society actors have the potential to play an important role in raising awareness both of the costs of continued conflict and the

opportunities and means to seek a way out through constructive engagement with opponents.

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 peace process can be crucial to its durability. 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.

While they can facilitate dialogue between the protagonists in armed struggle, CSO-led processes are often focused on enabling ordinary people to articulate what they really need and then working to find a common ground from which they can work to establish peaceful co-existence. Instead of the use of force, civil society actors generally need to rely on the kind of generative power that stems from creativity through stimulating a new sense of what is possible and how it can be achieved. This is rooted, ultimately, in a sense of agency: the ability to act together with others to change the world in ways that are more consistent with cherished values and ideals.

Multiple channels for CSO engagement in prevention & peacebuilding

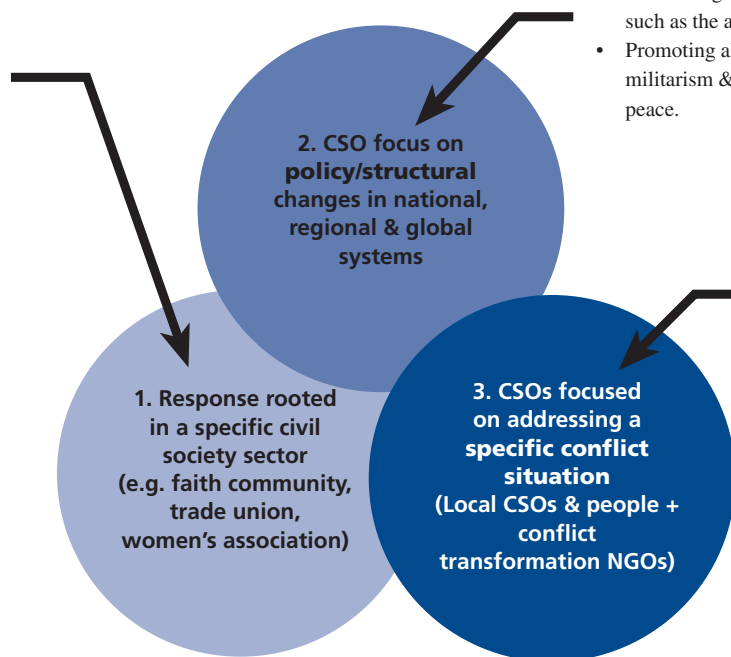
As discussed in the previous chapter, preventing violent conflict and building sustainable peace in a globalizing world requires strategies that address structural causes of conflict - many of which may be inherent in the global system - and enable partnerships between civil society actors at the local, national, regional and global levels and with governments, inter-governmental

²³ See, for example: Dean G Pruitt and Jeffrey Z. Rubin. 1986. *Social Conflict: Escalation, Stalemate, and Settlement*, 1st edition. New York: Random House; I. W. Zartman, 1985/1989. *Ripe for Resolution*, New York, Oxford University Press; Jeffrey Z. Rubin. 1991. “The Timing of Ripeness and the Ripeness of Timing,” in Kriesberg & Thorson, Eds. *Timing the De-Escalation of International Conflicts*. Syracuse NY: Syracuse University Press.

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CSO Orientations to Prevention & Peacebuilding

- Advocates group's interests & needs; therefore focused on addressing sources of conflict.
- Can often mobilise global network for solidarity, support & resources.
- Can often use unique position & legitimacy to facilitate change & mediate conflict.



- Addressing **root causes**, such as economic inequities.
- Addressing **enabling factors**, such as the arms trade.
- Promoting alternatives to militarism & building culture of peace.

- Can make a difference at every stage of conflict, using a range of approaches & roles
- Local civil society must be involved in processes to build sustainable peace & foster conflict transformation.

Figure 2: Civil Society Orientations to Working on Conflict Issues

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 2.

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 included 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 awareness-raising. Second, as described in the next subsection, there are CSOs who aim to address underlying structural problems that give rise to conflict in 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 who are focused primarily on responding to specific conflict situations, as outlined in the following box.

Cumulative effects: roles and functions of CSOs at different stages in the conflict cycle

It can be difficult for civil society-based peacebuilding initiatives to directly resolve large-scale armed conflict, especially when the macro-political situation remains unfavorable. In regions such as the Middle East and the Caucasus, conflicts appear deeply entrenched and intractable in part because the parties are in a geo-

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Some key CSO roles at different stages of the conflict cycle

Civil society roles in structural prevention to address the causes of conflict

- Addressing structural violence & promoting human security - through development, human rights monitoring & promotion, preventing environmental degradation...
- Making governments & state structures more responsive - through participation in political processes, policy dialogue, monitoring, advocacy campaigns, protests...
- Alleviating social tensions and conflict - through challenging xenophobia and discrimination, facilitating dialogue, promoting tolerance and a culture of peace...
- Strengthening capacities to mediate conflict and manage differences - through conflict resolution training, mediation services, education, promoting rule of law

Civil society roles in early operational crisis response and during violent conflict

- Early warning of emerging crises - monitoring, analysis, and communication strategies to raise awareness and generate attention
- Developing options and strategies for response - formulating recommendations, engaging in policy dialogue, problem-solving workshops
- Mobilizing political will for response - lobbying and campaigning, sensitizing domestic audiences
- Developing & strengthening 'constituencies for peace' and public awareness work, facilitating social dialogue, public protests...
- Violence reduction and monitoring; creating 'zones of peace'
- Humanitarian relief & support to war-affected communities

Civil society roles in peacemaking

- Facilitating communication and generating alternatives - Track II dialogue processes

- Creating a 'pragmatic peace' at the local level, strengthening local CSO capacities for conflict transformation & peacebuilding through public dialogue
- Developing a negotiation agenda and vision for the future that addresses the causes and consequences of conflict
- Participating in the political negotiations
- Facilitating / mediating political negotiations process

Preventing reoccurrence and post-settlement peacebuilding

- Public education & awareness-raising on the peace agreement and consolidating support.
- Facilitating the rehabilitation of war-affected relationships & communities; laying the groundwork for reconciliation.
- Contributing to transitional justice processes
- Resumption of initiatives contributing to structural prevention - encouraging good governance, reconstruction and development, mediating social conflict, promoting human rights...

political stalemate. Yet as has been seen in parts of Southern Africa, Central America and South-eastern Europe - all well known for protracted conflict in recent history - civil society initiatives have played a crucial role in bringing about sustained transitions. In all these cases, the cumulative effects of CSO initiatives helped by preparing the ground work for peace so that as conditions begin to shift, opportunities for peaceful resolution were not lost. Similarly, they aimed to

transform the deeper causes and consequences conflict are addressed and to support the transition from a shaky political agreement out of a negotiated process into a more sustainable peace.

As peacebuilding is a long-term process of social and political change, it is very difficult to assess the influence of a specific type of activity, initiative or methodology in the short term. The macro-processes

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through which civil society groups can foster longer-term change are not well understood. Low-key civil society initiatives often generate changes at a subtle and seemingly subterranean level. This can help to create conditions favorable for more dramatic bursts of change from high-profile efforts. In general, multiple efforts aiming at different kinds of outcomes can combine to create a climate that is ripe for change - as well as risk undermining it.

Specific CSO initiatives vs. aggregated civil society involvement

The effectiveness of civil society peacebuilding is sometimes questioned because it is extremely difficult to determine the effect of specific initiatives on the wider conflict dynamic. There are very valid concerns regarding the evaluation of the quality and effectiveness of specific efforts.²⁴

Therefore, when considering the relevance of civil society roles, it is important to distinguish between overall civil society involvement vs. specific CSO-led peacebuilding initiatives. In judging the effectiveness of civil society peacebuilding, it is necessary to understand how effects of a single initiative combine with other initiatives and contextual factors over time rather than evaluating them in isolation. This includes efforts by CSOs explicitly focused *on* working with conflict, as well as the wider range of agencies working *in* conflict situations. Three levels of analysis can be identified:

1. Roles of different groups of people (civil society groupings) within and outside a society in relation to conflict. This can include those who focus on mobilizing strategies to achieve their objectives by surfacing conflict through peaceful and / or armed means.
2. The combined impact of the range of CSO activities explicitly intended to contribute to peacebuilding in a specific conflict system.
3. The impact of a specific CSO initiative aimed at peacebuilding.²⁵

Each level of analysis can shed a different light on civil society roles in conflict situations. Often people focus principally on the third level - the effects of a specific

initiative - outside the wider context in which it is embedded. This can make it difficult to determine its influence on the wider conflict system over time.

The complex and cumulative effects of multiple - and even competing and seemingly contradictory - initiatives over time can probably only be properly understood retrospectively through historical analysis. These points can be illustrated, for example, by looking at a few of the many, many civil society-based activities that influenced the transition in South Africa.

Fostering change in South Africa: Cumulative effects of different types of civil society engagement²⁶

For decades, anti-apartheid and pro-democracy activists in South Africa sought to challenge the status quo through both nonviolent direct action (such as protest demonstrations) and an armed movement. They were trying to surface the conflict in a situation of profound structural violence when the balance of power was heavily weighted against them. Their efforts were supported by solidarity groups around the world and even by some governments (Northern European, as well as Soviet bloc). They enacted an international boycott and disinvestment strategies that were important for isolating South African whites and significant sections of the business community. This civil society-led campaigning strategy helped provide the incentive for the business community in particular to recognize the need for change and, eventually, to support a negotiated transition. Activists continued their movement-based activities throughout the

²⁴ See, for example, Mary Anderson and Lara Olson. 2003. *Confronting War: Critical Lessons for Peace Practitioners*. Collaborative for Development Action, Inc. Available online: http://www.cdainc.com/rpp/archives/2003/01/confronting_war.php

²⁵ Most of the evaluation literature pertains to level (c) and the profound methodological and practical challenges / limits to assessing the outcomes of specific initiatives. While this is very important, to fully understand the roles of civil society in peacebuilding, it is also necessary to explore the impacts associated with levels (a) and (b).

²⁶ See for example: Ebrahim, Hassen. 1998. *The Soul of a Nation: Constitution-Making in South Africa*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press; Gastrow, Peter. 1995. *Bargaining for Peace: South Africa and the National Peace Accord*. Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press; Lieberfeld, Daniel. 1999. *Talking with the Enemy: Negotiation and Threat Perception in South Africa and Israel / Palestine*. Westport CT and London: Praeger.

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negotiations, helping to strengthen the hand of their respective parties during the talks.

During the 1980s and early 1990s, there were quiet initiatives undertaken by civil society intermediaries to set up channels of communication and direct talks between the ANC leadership and government so they could begin to understand each other and start to sketch out the parameters of what a negotiation process could look like (e.g., facilitating the ‘talks about talks’). There were also numerous Track II dialogue processes involving prominent people from a range of other influential groupings - including churches, unions, and business leaders.

Some of the white South Africans involved in dialogue processes, especially through church groups, began to engage in soul searching about the morality of apartheid. In 1990, a national conference involving all but two Christian religious groups marked a historic moment towards reconciliation. The main church of the Afrikaner community, the Dutch Reformed Church, confessed its guilt and acknowledged its role in apartheid. Moved by this confession, delegates formulated the Rustenburg Declaration denouncing apartheid, calling for a democratic constitution and more equitable distribution of wealth. This changed the moral climate sustaining the legitimacy of apartheid for many of the faithful.

As the negotiations began, violence continued to escalate. Trade union, business and church leaders initiated the National Peace Accord process leading to an agreement between the main political parties to reduce the levels of violence. They established structures that relied very heavily on civil society mediators and monitors at the national, provincial and local levels to ameliorate violence. Their efforts were partially assisted by international partners and monitoring teams.

During the constitutional negotiations, civil society activists formulated policy papers on various agenda items and sustained public awareness of the issues. They played important roles in the constitution drafting and the public participation process that accompanied it.

Many South African peacebuilders had participated in earlier periods in training and other capacity building

initiatives provided by outsiders. These inputs were then adapted by South Africans for their own needs and context. In turn, many South African peacebuilders are now valuable resource people assisting local peacebuilders in conflict situations elsewhere in the world.

Roles and strategies: contradictions & complementarities

Civil society actors, whether ‘insiders’ or ‘outsiders’, are likely to grapple with the dilemmas around the best approaches and strategies for fostering change. Sometimes there appears to be a tension between approaches primarily aimed at ‘peace’ versus those primarily oriented toward achieving ‘justice’ or between initiatives promoting ‘reconciliation’ versus efforts to achieve goals by ‘whatever means necessary’. Yet these are not always contradictions; they can be different approaches aiming to get to similar ends through different means. Most civil society peacebuilders would argue that you can only have peace with justice and would strongly object to the idea that by working for one they would be working against the other. At the same time, many peacebuilders would argue that means matter: strategies to achieve justice that rely on violent coercion are highly likely to perpetrate further injustice and escalate cycles of revenge.

As different groups and different initiatives serve unique functions, it is necessary to better understand: (a) how they can complement rather than contradict / undermine each other and (b) challenges and possible contradictions in combining roles.

Nevertheless there are important differences between those focused on adversarial advocacy aimed at pressuring decision-makers to change in contrast to those who undertake impartial mediation / facilitation between parties in conflict. For example, a prominent human rights defender may not be the person who would be best suited to facilitate a quiet dialogue between representatives of a government and an armed group. Yet the dialogue facilitator (who may not have publicly denounced the government and armed group

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for their violations) can work to ensure that both parties end their violations through a cessation of hostilities agreement and get them to agree to human rights monitoring mechanisms. And it is possible that the reason why the government and armed group would decide to engage in dialogue in the first place is because they are embarrassed that their reputation has been impaired by the denunciations of the human rights community, which has led their allies in foreign governments to put pressure on them to change their behavior. Similarly, international solidarity groups are often important in helping to address imbalances of power, as demonstrated in the South African example above. This explicit form of ‘partiality’ is extremely

important in an overall process of conflict transformation and creating conditions for a just and sustainable peace.

This suggests the need for better understanding the potential complementarities of these seemingly contradictory civil society roles. It is also necessary to engage in further examination of the ethical underpinnings of certain interventions and to recognize that peacebuilding is not necessarily always aimed at stabilizing a situation but can - and often is - aimed at radical reform to achieve greater justice, albeit through peaceful means.

IV. Making peace by peaceful means: civil society roles & functions

Exploring specific methods for working with conflict & building peace

As indicated in previous chapters, civil society organizations can undertake a wide range of activities in response to conflict and the situations that give rise to it. While the work of CSOs involved in development, humanitarian relief, and human rights promotion - all of which respond to conflict situations in various ways - are comparatively well known, the methods used by CSOs explicitly aimed at addressing conflict can appear mysterious to those not involved.

This chapter therefore aims to provide a descriptive overview of some of the key roles civil society actors can play, organized around the function they fulfill and the methods utilized at different stages in a conflict's development. There is a deliberate focus on exploring the ways in which CSOs have been effective in making a positive contribution to addressing conflict. The brief case studies are intended to illustrate these points and, hopefully, help to inspire others facing similar sorts of challenges. There is no attempt to provide a more comprehensive analysis of the difficulties encountered and shortcomings experienced in these initiatives. Nor do the descriptions identify the many other contextual factors and preceding or contemporary initiatives that contributed to the successful outcomes described in these cases. Yet it is hoped that the overall effect of the chapter will be to highlight the multiple and distinctive ways in which civil society actors can and do make crucial contributions to peacebuilding.

Waging conflict constructively

Conflict is typically entwined with processes of change. Conflict can be embraced as a way of working proactively toward social change goals and is a feature of the struggle 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 and other nonviolent direct action. 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 Martin Luther King's in the struggle against racism and for civil rights in the USA.

This activist function of civil society manifests what can be considered both the 'power to resist' oppressive forces - typically through mobilizing effective mass movements for change - and the 'power to expose' oppression and thereby de-legitimize the authority of the oppressors. Furthermore, they have the 'power to persuade' both popular opinion and decision-makers of more constructive ways to respond to specific conflict situations and to address the structural problems that give rise to conflict.

Mobilizing for change: enacting the power of resistance

Sometimes the prevailing power structures in a society are deeply oppressive for a segment of the population or even for the majority. While there may not be full scale warfare, life for many is impaired by profound structural violence, often combined with actual or threatened direct violence against those who might challenge the status quo. These situations are typically maintained by the complicity of those who do not perceive themselves as negatively affected by the situation and by the pessimistic inertia of those who want change but see it as impossible.

Civil society activists play crucial roles in changing these situations by surfacing the conflict and escalating it nonviolently to bring about necessary changes. Often mobilized by some triggering situation that provokes an 'enough is enough!' response, they gather the sparks of resistance throughout the population into a movement capable of challenging the relevant power structures.

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Mass resistance and regime change: Otpor in Serbia²⁷

In Serbia, civil society activists were able to accomplish what NATO bombers could not do: to create sufficient pressure to bring about the downfall of the Milosevic regime. Triggered by new restrictions on academic and media freedom, a group of students mobilized 'Otpor', a resistance movement. They relied on innovative and elaborate tactics to engage the Serb population and break through the fear and hopelessness that had immobilized opposition to the Milosovic regime. They deliberately chose to form a leaderless movement. They wanted to avoid the infighting that had characterized the political opposition, whose leaders had often seemed more interested in protecting their own interests and fighting amongst themselves than in struggling against Milosevic. They recognized that young people in particular were less interested in political 'representation' and yearned for a way to express themselves. Joining Otpor gave them an opportunity to act.

Nonviolent direct action became the hallmark of Otpor as they sought to make themselves visible on the streets. They spray-painted humorous and eye-catching graffiti, disseminated T-shirts and badges, and self-organized demonstrations throughout the country, among other actions. They understood that the widespread fear of Milosovic and his security forces could best be transformed through humor. By making him look small and insignificant and by ridiculing the government's stupidity and brutality, they could reveal the true nature of the regime by making fun of it.

As the movement gained momentum, popular resistance gathered strength. Opposition parties, the independent media, NGOs, unions and professional organizations among others began to work together. Under mounting pressure, Milosovic announced early elections for all levels of government. Otpor responded by launching a campaign around the theme 'Gotov je!' or 'He's finished!'. Activists around the country began a door-to-door 'get out the vote' campaign and disseminated materials encouraging people to be active, to get involved and to vote against Milosovic. Crucially, they produced stickers announcing 'He's finished!' that were stuck onto

Milosovic's own campaign posters and on virtually any other surface accessible to supporters. The 'He's finished!' message began to feel real to a disillusioned population who turned out in large numbers to vote him out of office. Although Milosevic tried to deny the results and hundreds of thousands of people from across the country turned out in Belgrade to prevent him from stealing the election.

Civil society movements like Otpor are not only effective in bringing about change in their own society, they can also inspire people elsewhere to become active in shaping developments around them. International solidarity between civil society activists has often been crucial to supporting the effectiveness of local civic resistance movements. For example, Otpor activists provided assistance to the youth movements in both Georgia and in Ukraine, thus helping to support their crucial roles in the 'Rose Revolution' and the 'Orange Revolution' respectively.

Mass movements are not, however, the only way that civil society groups have sparked change. Sometimes they use existing institutional and legal systems to hold regimes to account or to address injustices. There is, however, often a need to combine formal legal strategies with approaches that aim to foster public awareness and the transformation of conflict attitudes and relationships. This can raise dilemmas around roles: it is not easy to balance the demands inherent in taking adversarial stance and using advocacy-based strategies with the qualities of impartiality typically associated with facilitating inter-communal dialogue. Sometimes these different functions are served by different civil society groups, which might agree on overall goals but seek to accomplish them through different methods. In other cases, civil society groups are able to fulfill multiple roles - although generally taking different approaches at different times.

²⁷ Based on Milja Jovanovic. 2005. "Rage Against the Regime: The Otpor Movement in Serbia" in van Tongeren, et al., *People Building Peace II*, op.cit.

IV. Making peace by peaceful means: civil society roles & functions

Citizens' Constitutional Forum in Fiji: From constitutional reform to championing democracy

Fiji remains deeply divided by race. Economic inequities and ethnic political competition have polarized the main groups of indigenous Fijians, Fijians of Indian origin and other minorities. This continues to affect Fiji's economy and governing system. Making a multi-party, multi-ethnic government work remains a major challenge for Fiji's citizens and leaders alike.

Citizens' Constitutional Forum (CCF) began life in 1993 when a multi-ethnic group of concerned citizens decided to convene national consultations to help create consensus for a democratic and non-racial constitution. In 1997 the new constitution was hailed as an international hallmark of ethnic conciliation and civil liberties. CCF then began to educate citizens, political parties and national leaders about the spirit and intent of the constitutional provisions. In the lead up to the first general election under the constitution, CCF held numerous workshops and produced a voter education kit, posters and pamphlets in Fijian, English and Hindi. Central to the public education effort was a popular version of the constitution, "Your Constitution, Your Rights". The 1999 election resulted in a coalition comprising the first multiracial government in Fiji's history. According to the UN Secretary General: "In Fiji, collaboration between non-governmental organizations and government officials, aided by quiet diplomacy on the part of regional States, resulted in the promulgation of a new Constitution and forestalled what many observers believed was a real possibility of violent conflict."²⁸

However in May 2000, a group led by businessman George Speight burst into the parliament and took the government hostage, demanding the return of indigenous Fijian supremacy. While the coup leaders were unsuccessful in seizing power, the elected government fell and the Constitution was suspended. In the vacuum created by the hostage taking, CCF assumed an increasingly public and 'oppositional' profile. It played a critical role in championing the restoration of the rule of law and continued recognition of the democratically-elected government. Although a logical development from its

earlier work on public awareness of human rights and civil liberties, this outspoken stance carried personal risks and sacrifices.

CCF and other Fijian pro-democracy groups, with support from international partners like Conciliation Resources, lobbied for international support to uphold Fiji's Constitution and to freeze 'non-humanitarian development assistance'. Yet no significant action was taken by the international community to support a return to democracy and the rule of law - revealing the tendency to prioritize stability over rule of law. Domestically, CCF had more impact than in the international arena. With no party-political bias it undertook sustained and extensive media work defending the 1997 Constitution and speaking out against the coup. During 2001 and 2002, CCF and the NGO Coalition on Human Rights supported and initiated several high profile legal challenges. They provided legal support for the landmark case that restored the Constitution, when the Court of Appeal ruled that the Constitution remained in force. This became the first case in world history where a court ruled that a coup was illegal while the regime was still in power and where the regime accepted the ruling.

Much work remains to be done if Fiji is to avoid a relapse into another wave of ethnic violence and conflict. These experiences demonstrate the challenges and complexity inherent in non-violent struggles for genuine public participation and democratic institutions, which is often at the heart of 'conflict prevention'.

Bearing witness: the power to expose

Sometimes civil society initiatives are crucial in directing attention to a situation that is unacceptable but which has been avoided by the wider public, a silence that effectively underpins the status quo. The very act of public disclosure and / or denouncing the situation can make the truth evident in ways that are very difficult to ignore and may empower people to take action to change the situation.

²⁸ Report of the UN Secretary General, 54th Session

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CSOs can bear witness to violations in powerful ways that undermine the moral authority and legitimacy of abusers. This exposure sometimes stimulates conditions that lead to the collapse of regimes over the long term. They can also dissuade the wider public from accepting or participating in acts that enable abuse and oppression.

Most people do not commit violent and / or anti-social acts if they are being watched by outside observers or if the social environment does not tolerate or encourage what they are doing. Most people in situations of armed conflict are essentially 'bystanders': they are not primary actors but stand to the side while it is happening. Social psychologists have long been interested in the conditions that enable mass violence and have identified the passivity of bystanders as one factor. According to Erwin Staub:

In most societies there are some who are prepared to turn against other groups. It is the population as a whole that provides or denies support for this. The people's support, opposition, or indifference largely shapes the course of events. Opposition from bystanders, whether based on moral or other grounds, can change the perspective of perpetrators and other bystanders, especially if the bystanders act at an early point on the continuum of destruction. They may cause the perpetrators to question the morality of their violent acts or become concerned about the consequences for themselves. Internal opposition from bystanders may require great courage. Other nations are often passive, even though attempts to exert influence may require little courage or real sacrifice from them.²⁹

Institutionally, CSOs are often in the bystander category and have significant capacity to influence their members and the other people who respect their views. Educators influence the social learning and knowledge of their students; artists give voice and expression to barely articulated feelings and perceptions; unions and advocacy groups provide form and force for promoting and defending rights; media organizations inform the public and shape their response.

Religious communities are particularly powerful institutional bystanders. Widely shared religious beliefs, values, and practices are an expression of the basic worldview of the mainstream in a society. Religious leaders provide guidance on interpreting these beliefs and traditions and articulate the appropriate values and correct moral behavior for living in alignment with these beliefs. Therefore religious leaders have a special role to play in both perpetrating and preventing violent conflict. If religious leaders legitimate policies that lead to mass violence or the dehumanizing ideology that justifies it, they directly contribute to creating an environment in which the faithful accept mass murder and may even justify it with a sense of self-sacrificing duty to a higher cause. Yet religious leaders can also be critical in preventing it. Because religious leaders are generally accorded moral authority, if they dissent publicly from the conflict leaders and / or their ideology, they can severely undermine the legitimacy of the cause. They can also organize their followers to take actions to 'bear witness' and engage in initiatives intended to stop the violence and promote alternatives. An example of this principle comes from the time of the Nazi Holocaust, where majority of Jews evaded deportation in every state occupied by or allied with Germany in which the head of the dominant church spoke out publicly against deportation before or as soon as it began.³⁰ It appears that with this encouragement the 'bystander' population - who, in other countries, either passively accepted or actively supported the deportation of the Jewish population - were mobilized to criticize the Nazi policy and actively helped Jews within their community when they were at risk.

Never again!: Restoring memory in Brazil and Guatemala³¹

During the period of military rule in Brazil, thousands of civilians were tortured by army officers who kept meticulous records of their activities. During the

²⁹ Erwin Staub. 1989. *The Roots of Evil: The Origins of Genocide and Other Group Violence*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. pp21-22.

³⁰ See Helen Fein. 1993. *Genocide: A Sociological Perspective*. (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications)

³¹ Based on Chapters 10.4 and 20.1 in van Tongeren, et al., *People Building Peace II*, op.cit.

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transition back to civilian rule, the Brazilian military offered an amnesty both to political prisoners and to the state security agents who had tortured them. With no impartial investigation of what happened during this period, Brazilian society remained divided as to the 'truth' of this difficult period. This led to bitterness amongst those who had suffered and complacency amongst those who either denied or were ignorant of what had happened.

A group of lawyers collaborated with a Presbyterian minister and a Catholic Cardinal in a secret initiative to document this period, with funding and practical assistance from the World Council of Churches (WCC). Rules governing procedures for amnesty hearings allowed lawyers brief access to the official state files held on their clients. These files were surreptitiously photocopied, microfiched and sent to the WCC's offices in Geneva. Operating in the utmost secrecy over five years, the organisers photocopied more than a million pages in their archive. This material was then condensed into a 7,000 page report detailing the extent of state repression. This report was then turned into a more readable narrative that was published as "Brasil: Nunca mais" (Brazil: Never Again). This vivid account of the 'who, what, how and why' of the years of repression became an immediate best seller, sparking public discussion and soul searching. The 444 torturers named in the book, many of whom held high positions, were now publicly known for their crimes. Even though they were not brought to justice in a court of law, their social status - and often their career - was stripped away. For those who had risked so much in the Nunca Mais project, what was most important was for the memory of the repression to be preserved with as much accuracy as possible so as to help prevent it from ever happening again.

Guatemala has also been divided by long years of civil war and repression. In 1995, the Office of Human Rights of the Archbishop of Guatemala launched the Project for the Reconstruction of a Historical Memory, REMHI, under the leadership of Bishop Juan Gerardi Concerda. It was intended to complement the official Commission for Historical Clarification, whose weak mandate dissatisfied many.

The REMHI process centered on taking testimonies from thousands of citizens affected by the war, mostly as victims but also some perpetrators. Based on these testimonies, REMHI produced a four volume public report documenting the full range of crimes committed during the war, predominantly by state security forces but also by insurgents.

Those who testified believed that the process would contribute to discovering the truth and would dignify the dead. Many felt that it would restore 'the power of speech' to those who had been silenced by the terror. They hoped it would provide a record for future generations that it was not possible to erase the memory of a people. When he presented the report, Guatemala: Nunca Más, Bishop Gerardi explained that: "When we began this project, we were interested in discovering the truth in order to share it...in reconstructing the history of pain and death, seeing the reasons for it, understanding the why and the how. ... It's not enough to just accept the facts. It is necessary to reflect on them and to recover the values lost. We are gathering memories of the people because we want to contribute to the construction of a different country."³² Perhaps indicative of the danger that perpetrators felt from REMHI, shortly after presenting the report, Bishop Gerardi was assassinated by three military officers. Yet the report lives on, a testimony by which to banish amnesia and lay the foundations for long term change.

Systemic prevention: campaigns addressing the root causes of conflict

There is a long history of people's movements and campaigns to challenge and change the status quo. The role of civic activists in initiating and powering change summons images of the anti-slavery / abolitionist movement; struggles against colonialism; movements for civil rights; Anti-War; Trade-Justice and to 'Make Poverty History'. As discussed in Chapter III, 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

³² Quoted in Dave Lindstrom. "Putting the Pieces Back Together" Foundation of Human Rights in Guatemala. Online at: <http://www.fhrg.org/remhi/pieces.htm>

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significant force in shaping global responses to key structural problems.

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’. Don Hubert points out that a strength of non-governmental campaigners lies in their ability to reframe issues as humanitarian imperatives. He gives the example of the crucial turning point in the Campaign to Ban Landmines when the discourse shifted from focusing the issue in the frame of disarmament (e.g., focused on the weapon, concerned with military effectiveness, and therefore the business of government negotiators concerned with military issues) to the frame of humanitarianism (e.g., focused on victim, concerned with human impact, and therefore the concern of human rights and humanitarian experts).

Although the ban is a disarmament treaty, the humanitarian orientation was effective in giving greater weight to the scale of human suffering they cause and in helping to depoliticize the issue. As Hubert observes: *“Among the greatest assets that campaigners have is the ability to frame the issues in ways that make bold new directions in international action appear self-evident.”*³³

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. Recently,

there have been efforts to change how the international community responds to armed conflict, with the aim of making it more people-centered in its priorities and practices.

Women Building Peace Campaign & Security Council Resolution 1325³⁴

In the late 1990s, a broad-based coalition of peacebuilding activists joined together to address the marginalization of women and girls in official peace and security matters through the global campaign ‘Women Building Peace: From the Village Council to the Negotiating Table’, launched by International Alert. They aimed to ensure that both the concerns of women and their often overlooked peacebuilding activities become more central to ‘mainstream’ conflict resolution activities. They specifically wanted to address: (1) women’s exclusion from decision-making processes; (2) their absence from post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation processes; (3) insufficient protection for refugee, displaced and other war-affected women; (4) the need for mechanisms to end impunity for crimes committed against women in war; and (5) the need for resources to support women’s peacebuilding work.

Prior to the launch of the campaign, women from 48 conflict areas met to share experiences and to develop a common platform. Jordan’s Queen Noor agreed to serve as the campaign’s patron and an advisory body was formed of 19 women from different backgrounds in the field. 350 organizations signed onto the campaign, many of whom served as local, national or regional focal points. Aspiring to influence the policies of the United Nations and of the European Union, the strategy was based on developing carefully researched analysis of the full range of issues related to women in peacebuilding. They used this knowledge to generate policy documents and

33 Don Hubert. 2005. “Lessons from Campaigns of the 1990s: Innovations in Humanitarian Advocacy” in van Tongeren, et al., *People Building Peace II*, op.cit., p560.

34 Based on Ancil Adrian-Paul “Making a Difference: The International Women Building Peace Campaign” in van Tongeren, et al., *People Building Peace II*, op.cit.

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recommendations for policymakers, parliamentarians, women's groups, churches, the media and other relevant constituencies. They also aimed to raise public awareness of the issues and launched a global petition addressed to the UN Secretary-General and obtained 100,000 signatures from people around the world.

Their key campaign goal was to achieve a Security Council resolution. A coalition, the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, was formed to spearhead policy advocacy. Realizing that support from UN agencies and key Security Council members would be crucial, the campaigners systematically initiated policy dialogue with them on the issues. They provided information and analysis on the impact of armed conflict on women as well as the positive roles they can play and the need to include them directly in peace processes. Namibia agreed to put these issues on the Security Council's agenda and Jamaica and Ireland hosted informal 'Arria Formula' meetings where Security Council members could discuss the issues with Working Group members. While the campaign received support from many agencies and individuals at the UN, the Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) became a key ally. In October 2000, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. It explicitly addressed the specific and disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women, acknowledged the important roles women can play and sought to address their under-representation in official peace and security institutions, policies and processes. The resolution addressed many of the specific concerns raised by the campaign. While the resolution is written in relatively cautious language that weakens its enforceability, it nevertheless represents a landmark agreement. It provides leverage to those advocating women's increased participation and protection and a rationale for demanding accountability of states and UN bodies. Furthermore, the overall campaign has raised significant awareness around the world on the role of women and provided resources and encouragement for addressing the issues on the ground.

Shifting conflict attitudes: the power to re-frame & change perceptions

People involved in conflict tend to have a complex set of feelings, beliefs and perceptions about themselves and about their opponents. Especially in protracted conflict, these shape underlying structures of beliefs, values, and the interpretation of experiences. These 'conflict attitudes' play an important role in shaping the way a conflict unfolds and are a significant challenge in processes to resolve the situation. These attitudes can be so deeply rooted that they are woven into the basic cognitive frames for perceiving the world.³⁵

In the context of a conflict, we create frames to help us understand why the conflict exists, why those involved act the way they do, and how we should act in response. During the evolution of a conflict, frames act as sieves through which information is gathered and analyzed, positions are determined (including judgments regarding what are seen as 'reasonable' priorities, methods, and solutions), and action plans developed. Opposing parties in a conflict often frame the situation in dramatically different ways. Thus, they are separated not only by differences in interests, beliefs, and values but also in how they perceive and understand the world, both at a conscious and pre-conscious level. This can easily lead to mutually incompatible interpretations of events.

Yet there are countless examples of experiences that have radically transformed these frames, fundamentally shifting perceptions of one's self and of one's opponents. At the center of these experiences is often the disclosure of a 'personal truth' that has resonance with wider

³⁵ All people 'frame' their perceptions of the world around them to help make sense of complex information. Frames are cognitive shortcuts to organize phenomena into coherent, understandable categories that give meaning to some aspects of what is observed, while discounting other aspects because they appear irrelevant or counter-intuitive. Depending on the context, framing may be used to conceptualize and interpret, or to manipulate and convince. For an overview on framing, see Sandra Kaufman, Michael Elliott and Deborah Shmueli. "Frames, Framing and Reframing" in *Beyond Intractability*. Ed. Guy Burgess and Heidi Burgess. Conflict Research Consortium, University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado. Online: <http://www.beyondintractability.org/m/framing.jsp>

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audiences. Often revealed through testimony of a very human story, this can unlock silence from others with shared experience and from those who are uncomfortable with their complicity in violence. By making appeals to the moral consciousness and creating movements that empower ordinary people to take action to change the world around them, civil society actors can influence the underlying dynamics of a conflict situation.

The ‘power to expose’, described in the previous section, reveals the importance of awakening the moral conscience of those involved in conflict. In addition, there are other methods that are intended to cultivate a shift in the dehumanized images of ‘the enemy’ that so often characterize people’s perceptions of their counterparts in the conflict relationship. Civil society initiatives are often particularly valuable for cultivating empathy across the conflict divide and thereby helping to shift conflict attitudes.

People in conflict often assume that their adversaries are and will always be their enemies. Despite assumptions to the contrary, enemies are not born, but are constructed out of the conflict situation and its attendant psychological aspects. Enemies are dehumanized when members of a group perceive members of their opponent group as not fully human or even inhuman. This mechanism is a psychological precondition to engaging in or sanctioning violent aggression. It is often stimulated by propaganda in the mobilization to war. If the enemy is not really human, then it is psychologically easier to suspend the moral inhibitions against senseless destruction that are present in virtually every culture.

Many grassroots peacebuilders in societies locked in protracted conflict recognize the importance of promoting people-to-people dialogue across the conflict divides to begin to shift entrenched conflict dynamics. The process of direct engagement with enemies as human beings can be crucial and lead to a process of ‘rehumanizing relations’ across conflict divides. This is often facilitated by establishing direct communication between people with some common attribute: such as a similar occupational role (e.g., teachers, journalists), identity characteristics (e.g., women, youth), or

common experiences of the conflict (e.g., ex-combatants, policy advisors). The experience of encountering those who have been regarded as enemies and perceiving them as human beings can shake monolithic perceptions of ‘the other’ and challenge the discourses of hate. This can result in personal transformation through the constructive deployment of cognitive dissonance that can ultimately shake up perceptions of the conflict: participants may seek to change perceptions in their own circles that ‘they all want to destroy us’ because they now know that there are people in the other community who are similar to themselves in seeking a reasonable solution to the conflict.

Katarina Kruhonja, of the Centre for Peace, Nonviolence and Human Rights in Osijek, Croatia has identified the power of listening as a tool for peacebuilding. She draws on her experiences with the Centre’s ‘Listening Project’, implemented in ten multi-ethnic communities in eastern Croatia and Bosnia severely affected by the war during the 1990s. Volunteers interviewed more than 2,000 people about their experiences. They learned that:

”Listening is an exchange in which I give you my time and undivided attention in a non-judgemental way... instead of solutions, advice or pity, I give you acceptance, trust and support. Listening is a joint journey in which one learns to better understand one’s own situation; it is a way to let a part of the pain, shame, fear and anger go; it is focusing on the future and empowerment for taking actions. ... [Many of those interviewed reported that] for the first time they had a feeling...that their suffering and their opinion were important to someone.”³⁶

These exchanges were apparently empowering for both the speakers and for the listeners. Five years after the conclusion of the Listening Project, real change is evident in the region. Independent research has identified the experience of this project as helping to support this change. Furthermore, some of those who

³⁶ Quoted in GPPAC Conference Report, op.cit., p24.

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were involved in the project have gone on to work in their communities on trust-building and peacebuilding and thereby increasing the resources available to the community over the long-term. The power of this form of direct communication is also evident in the following example from the Middle East.

Facilitating empathy across conflict divides: the 'Hello Peace' project in Israel & Palestine³⁷

One of the barriers to peacemaking in the Palestine and Israeli conflict is the popular belief that neither side is willing to be a true 'partner for peace' to the other, a perception that is rooted in a profound lack of trust. The Families Forum - an organization of Palestinians and Israelis who have lost family members through the conflict - operates on the assumption that it is necessary to promote reconciliation to help bring the self-perpetuating cycle of violence to an end. They work to foster empathy for those from the opposing community who have suffered losses, believing that is a key step in the process of reconciliation. They feel that such empathy can create the emotional changes needed to transform the views that underpin the current conflict and to build trust.

The Hello Shalom/Hello Salaam (Hello Peace) project was set up to stimulate empathy. It began with a misdialled phone call, when an Israeli accidentally called a Palestinian in the Gaza Strip. The conversation that ensued helped each to gain a new perspective on the other's situation. They passed on their telephone numbers to others and soon a small circle of strangers were talking with each other by phone. This became the kernel of the Hello Peace project, which enables Israelis and Palestinians to call a special number to be automatically connect with someone 'on the other side' who has expressed a willingness to talk. The initiative was launched with a massive media campaign in both Arabic and Hebrew and met with a wide response. 500,000 telephone conversations were held in the first two years. The direct and intimate nature of the contact helped participants to perceive their counterparts as human beings, rather than as nameless members of an impersonal 'other' group. In a number of cases, this experience has helped participants to understand more

of the complexity of the situation and the difficulties experienced by those living on the other side. By getting thousands of Israelis and Palestinians to talk directly with each other - and by publicizing this fact - Hello Peace hopes to break down the psychological, if not physical, barriers between the peoples.

Envisioning a better future: power to identify, analyze & propose

There is an old saying: 'if you don't know where you are going, you won't know how to get there'. Most people aspire for peacebuilding initiatives to create a better future. Elise Boulding proposes the importance of 'imagining the future' as a way of enabling people to create positive images of desirable scenarios that will inspire them to act creatively in the present.³⁸ This suggests the importance of deliberately thinking about the future in order to develop what Lederach calls a 'generational vision', which involves "*articulating distant but nonetheless desirable structural, systemic and relationship goals.*"³⁹ It is from debates within the public sphere of civil society that these visions of a desirable future - and the strategies to achieve them - often emerge.

These processes are significant at both the personal level and as a wider societal / collective process, as described below. Ultimately, the capacity of people to make a personal shift in their attitudes and approach can be highly significant both for their individual level of motivation and for the effect they have on others through their actions. For example, John Marks co-founder of Search for Common Ground, describes such an important shift in his own life: "*I realized I was increasingly defined by what I opposed. I came to see another possibility: namely, that I could live my life and*

37 Based on Aaron Barnea and Ofer Shinar "Building Trust, Promoting Hope: The Families Forum Hello Peace Project in Israel and Palestine" in van Tongeren, et al., *People Building Peace II*, op.cit.

38 See Intractable Conflict Knowledge Base Project, Conflict Research Consortium, University of Colorado, available at <http://www.beyondintractability.org/iweb/audio/boulding-e-3-future-studies1.html>

39 John Paul Lederach. 1997. *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. Washington DC: US Institute of Peace Press, p77.

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*do my work from a place not of being against the old system but of being for a new one.*⁴⁰ From this he embraced processes that moved away from adversarial, win-lose approaches. This has been an ethos that has guided much of the work of Search for Common Ground, the international NGO he then formed with consequences for many lives.

Developing a vision for a better future

Sustainable peace processes need to be about more than finding ways to end the fighting; attention must also be directed to supporting 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 its members aspire to create. This fosters a process of social imagination. Looking back on sustained peace processes, it is possible to identify moments where public visioning was facilitated by large-scale public initiatives. In some cases, these processes have been aimed primarily at engaging publics in thinking about how to shift the current conflict dynamics. These can be aimed at identifying the deeper causes of conflict and eliciting ideas for ways forward.

Northern Ireland: Initiative '92 and the Opsahl Commission⁴¹

A group of civil activists established Initiative '92 to conduct what they called a 'citizens' inquiry' to take opinions from the community and political parties on how to move forward in ending the troubles. It comprised well-respected individuals from Ireland and Britain and was chaired by Professor Torkel Opsahl from Norway. Its lasting contribution may have been its efforts to encourage community groups and individuals to think and to discuss the options for the future. As a result, the wider community began to have greater confidence in putting forward views and engaging with the political process and politicians from whom most had felt alienated for so long. For example, the leaders of the seven main coordinating bodies of industry, business and trade unions formed a loose group, known as the G7, through which they developed opportunities for dialogue with politicians. Two local newspapers, identified with the sectarian

divisions, began to work together, even printing a common editorial on one occasion.

In another example, South Africa's Freedom Charter process aimed to develop a broadly shared vision about the kind of society South Africans would want to live in. The experience illustrates that it can sometimes take decades for the significance of a visioning process to be fully realized, yet that the vision can be sustaining as guiding principles throughout the long process.

South African Freedom Charter⁴²

Drawing on Mohandas Gandhi's earlier campaigns to promote the rights of South Africa's Indian laborers, in 1952 activists organized a mass civil disobedience campaign that broadened the base of organized resistance to the apartheid system. In 1955, five years before it was banned, the African National Congress (ANC) convened a Congress of the People to develop a Freedom Charter for all South Africans. The charter articulated 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. It was a unique experience of mass participation in a political visioning process amidst hostile political circumstances and shaped the implicit expectation for public participation in creating a new South Africa.

Preparations began in 1953 as hundreds of activists organized meetings and house-to-house canvasses to alert South Africans to the project. Ordinary citizens 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?" The organizers learned that if they

40 John Marks. 2005. "Understand the Differences, Act on the Commonalities" in van Tongeren, et al., *People Building Peace II*, op.cit. p185

41 Based on: Clem McCartney. 1999. "The Role of Civil Society" in McCartney (Ed) *Striking A Balance: The Northern Ireland Peace Process*. Accord 8. London: Conciliation Resources. <http://www.c-r.org/accord>

42 From Eldred de Klerk. 2002. "South Africa's Negotiated Transition: Context, Analysis and Evaluation" in Catherine Barnes, Ed. *Owning the Process: Public Participation in Peacemaking*. Accord 13. London: Conciliation Resources. Online: <http://www.c-r.org/accord/peace/accord13/saneg.shtml>

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wanted people to participate, they needed to meet them where they lived, worked and played. This lesson became a powerful operating principle for the democracy movement that emerged in the 1980s. The organizers were instructed not to write demands on behalf of the people but rather to collect and collate the perspectives they heard; to enable processes that allowed the dispossessed and disempowered to find their own voice rather than see themselves as representatives who could ‘speak for’ the people. Communities also nominated delegates to represent their group at the mass gathering and collected money for their travel.

The government tried to impede the Congress as it became obvious that the process was gathering momentum: meetings were banned, gatherings disrupted by the police, and materials confiscated or destroyed. Despite a police cordon on 26 June 1955 in Kliptown, Johannesburg, the Freedom Charter was written, based on the deliberations of the 2,800 delegates who had gathered on a dusty patch of ground to debate the results of the consultations. Its central principle was that: “South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, and no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of the people.” While South Africans had to wait four painful decades before this vision could be achieved, it remained a guiding principle for the struggle.

Defining the peace agenda

Peace and politics cannot be divorced. The issue is how to involve ordinary people in developing a political agenda that guides the negotiations and the agreements concerning governance and the structure of state institutions. Those outside the warring parties in civil society can develop a public voice that articulates new scenarios for peaceful coexistence by identifying underlying substantive issues generating conflict and impeding human security.

Sometimes a visioning process is launched under the government’s auspices. In the Philippines, for example, President Ramos created a National Unification Commission that organized public consultations in almost all the provinces and regions of the country to

identify the underlying causes of conflict. The outcomes of these consultations were compiled in a document, the ‘*Six Paths to Peace*’, which came the basis for the negotiation agenda and guided the government’s peace strategy. Not surprisingly, this initiative stirred up controversy and some suspicion as to motives. Nevertheless, it was a landmark in generating awareness of the specific underlying structural causes of the conflicts and the aspiration to address them in addition to settling the ongoing military confrontations.⁴³

In some cases, civil society dialogue has been crucial to focusing awareness on the underlying issues that need to be addressed in a negotiation process if it is to lay the foundations for a durable and just peace.

Defining the negotiating agenda and shaping the substantive agreements: the Civil Society Assembly in Guatemala⁴⁴

The Guatemalan peace accords finalized in December 1996 brought a formal end to a war that had lasted intermittently for 36 years. They included almost 200 substantive commitments that, if fulfilled, would bring significant changes to the structure of the Guatemalan state and society and go some way towards addressing issues that many believed to be the underlying source of protracted conflict. The scope of the accords was due partially to several mechanisms that enabled representatives of organized sectors of civil society to engage with the talks process. Through these discussions and subsequent lobbying efforts, civil society representatives helped to shape a negotiating agenda and then contributed proposals on how to address substantive issues.

With the easing of super-power confrontation in the late 1980s, efforts were made to address the wars that had wracked Central America for decades. Esquipules II,

43 See Miriam Coronel Ferrer. 2002. “Philippines National Unification Commission: National Consultation and the Six Paths to Peace” in Catherine Barnes, Ed. *Owning the Process: Public Participation in Peacemaking*. Accord 13. London: Conciliation Resources. Online: <http://www.c-r.org/accord/peace/accord13/phi.shtml>

44 Adapted from: Enrique Alvarez with Tania Palencia Prado. 2002. “Guatemala feature study” in Catherine Barnes, Ed. *Owning the Process: Public Participation in Peacemaking*. Accord 13. Conciliation Resources. <http://www.c-r.org/accord/peace/accord13/index.shtml>

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a regional inter-governmental process for promoting peace, was the catalyst for talks between the government and the insurgents in Guatemala. The conflict was previously defined by the establishment in purely Cold War terms (e.g. a fight by 'freedom defenders' against 'communists' or by 'socialist revolutionaries' against 'feudalist and capitalists'). Esquipules II shifted attention to the internal dynamics of conflict. One of the provisions was to create a government-sponsored and church-led National Reconciliation Commission.

In 1989 the Commission organized the Grand National Dialogue. It facilitated talks between 47 sectoral organizations, such as unions, business associations, and agrarian cooperatives. The aim was to identify and promote consensus on the major topics of concern to peacemaking. The participating organizations identified the issues they wanted discussed. Out of a large initial list, fifteen topics were accepted and classified into four main areas: (1) support and reinforcement of the democratic system; (2) organization and participation of citizens; (3) quality of life; and (4) economic policies. Representatives of the participating organizations made proposals on the topics they considered a priority, which were then discussed in plenary session by delegates from all the participating groups. A key substantive outcome was the recommendation that negotiations should address the structural conditions generating conflict, rather than focus only on arrangements to end the military confrontation.

This process was the first time that the problems generating armed conflict were discussed openly in the public arena. Although it did not result in conclusive outcomes, the analysis was vitally important several years later when it helped to define the official negotiating agenda between the insurgency and the government. Furthermore, it set the stage for the involvement of civil society groups and transformed the closed characteristics of the negotiations. The demands for political negotiation stopped being the exclusive concern of the parties directly involved in the conflict. They, in turn, started to realize that a solution to the armed confrontation had to involve civil society.

In 1994, bilateral talks between the government and the URNG - mediated by the UN and supported by key countries in the 'Group of Friends' - resumed again in earnest. Under pressure from civil society, they agreed to create a Civil Society Assembly (ASC) to accompany the official negotiations. The ASC was mandated to discuss the substantive issues addressed in the bilateral negotiations and to formulate consensus positions on the six of the seven main topics on the formal negotiating agenda. The government and URNG alone would discuss the specific arrangements for ending the military confrontation. The ASC was charged with making proposals to address the substantive issues on the rest of the agenda: (1) strengthening civil society and the function of the army in a democratic society; (2) the identity and rights of indigenous people; (3) constitutional reform and the electoral regime; (4) the resettlement of those displaced by the conflict; (5) socio-economic conditions; and (6) the agrarian situation. The agreement specified that any ASC recommendations or guidelines on these issues would be considered by the negotiators but were non-binding on them. The ASC would, in turn, review the final agreements signed by the parties on substantive issues and could endorse them but the ASC did not have the power to veto those it did not endorse. In the end, most of the ASC's recommendations were incorporated into the final accords - thus making civil society a vital, if non-decision making, presence in the negotiations.

Shaping peace policy

Civil society actors can make an important contribution by identifying overlooked problems and policy gaps, analyzing issues and recommending solutions. In short, they can identify the central agenda of issues that need to be addressed in responding to a conflict situation and dealing with peace and security issues more widely. Civil society groups can analyze the situation, formulate recommendations, develop policy options and engage in policy dialogue to address conflicts. They can also mobilize advocacy campaigns to generate political will amongst decision-makers and implement strategies to achieve the desired results.

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Because they do not have formal decision-making power and because they often promote causes that are unpopular with governments and contradict other powerful interests, CSOs have to be skilful to ensure that their voices are heard. Governments and corporations are more likely to listen when they perceive that CSOs have the support of large numbers of people who want change. Thus civil society efforts at raising public awareness about a particular set of problems is intertwined with efforts to motivate political decision-makers to take action to address them. Rebecca Peters explains the distinction between these two levels of strategy:

”Awareness-raising is indirect and aims to mobilize the power of public opinion in support of a cause. It aims to change public consciousness and arouse interest in an issue by providing information on the nature, extent and complexity of a problem, as well as what can be done to solve it. Such information can have an impact on the decisions made by individuals on whether to buy a particular product...or whether to vote for a parliamentary candidate who supports a particular cause. Lobbying specifically targets the policymakers: the people in society who have the power to change the laws under which we live. Classic lobbying consists of pressuring politicians to take specific decisions—such as whether to support or reject a certain piece of legislation—that will further a particular cause.”⁴⁵

Civil society efforts at public awareness-raising and lobbying have been crucially important in setting the agenda at the global level, as discussed previously, and in addressing more local and national concerns.

Mobilizing constituencies for peace

Generating public support and applying pressure 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 assertion by demonstrating that public opinion rejects military approaches. Through 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. These can help to transform social and political dynamics to support atmosphere conducive to peacebuilding / peace negotiations

Women’s Mass Action for Peace: WIPNET in Liberia⁴⁶

In 2003, Liberia was once again in the grip of armed conflict, with various insurgent groups controlling most of the countryside and beginning to close in on the capital. A substantial network of community-based women’s groups decided that they would not sit on the sidelines as passive victims of the war but would aim to bring an end to the fighting. The initiative was organized through the Liberian section of the Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET), a West African women’s network linked with WANEP. According to Thelma Ekiyor: “We knew that one or two voices could be ignored but decided that if we spoke in a large and wide collective, our own network, the cacophony of our voices, tears, articles and marches would definitely reach the right ears.”⁴⁷

Women from all parts of Liberian society - including those from displaced persons camps, churches, markets, schools and NGOs, and especially those from rural communities - were mobilized in a ‘Mass Action for Peace’ around the simple and effective message: “We Want Peace; No More War.” They took to the streets carrying banners and held a daily inter-

45 Rebecca Peters. 2005. “Campaigning to Create Awareness: How to Influence People and Change the World” in van Tongeren, et al., *People Building Peace II*, op.cit., p519.

46 Based on Thelma Aremiebi Ekiyor and Leymah Roberta Gbowee “Women’s Peace Activism in West Africa: The WIPNET Experience” in van Tongeren, et al., *People Building Peace II*, op.cit.

47 Quoted in GPPAC Conference Report, op. cit., p25.

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faith prayer vigil. Ignored initially, the power of their message spread to become a popular song and unifying theme. As their advocacy campaign became a serious force for change, they forged links with other civil society sectors, such as church leaders and NGOs. Their persistent presence mobilized public pressure and shamed the international community. They called for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire, dialogue for a negotiated settlement, and a peacekeeping force. To promote these demands, they learned how to effectively use the media and to lobby the international community. Even President Charles Taylor agreed to meet with the group after considerable pressure had mounted.

When the fighting forces agreed to a peace conference, WIPNET sent a delegation to Ghana to monitor the talks in Accra. They then mobilized Liberian diaspora and refugee women, with solidarity from Ghanaian WIPNET members, to take up the campaign. They also collaborated with other women's groups who were delegates at the talks, such as the Mano River Women's Peace Network. They organized a parallel Liberian Women's Forum to assess progress in the negotiations and to advocate issues of importance to Liberian women and citizens more widely. They issued joint statements, urging attention to civilian casualties. They met regularly with delegates from all parties to discuss these issues and make recommendations. Each morning of the talks, the delegates and participating Heads of State from the region were greeted by women sitting on the lawn, holding placards demanding peace.

When the talks stalled, the women felt that Liberians were being held hostage by the delegates. They decided to do something about it. They barricaded the door to prevent the negotiators from leaving until they agreed to take the process seriously and reach an agreement. The chief mediator pleaded with the women to move but they refused. This nonviolent direct action approach was effective. Their demonstration gained press attention, with television coverage of the stand-off. Partly in response to the publicity, the talks resumed. WIPNET was asked to participate in meetings to develop peace strategies, including on the political

and security committee. Their mass action reminded everyone at the talks and the world more widely that an entire population was awaiting the outcome and would not settle for anything less than peace. Their involvement highlighted that the women were stakeholders in the conflict and had a role to play in the peace process and in discussing basic issues concerning the future of their country. It also revealed what women can do if they mobilize themselves in large numbers.

The Liberian experience reveals the significance of mobilizing public pressure in favor of a peace process leading to a negotiated outcome and the role of CSOs in developing this support. Conversely, there are also examples of the risks to a negotiated peace process if the wider conflict-affected population is resistant to compromise. For example, in the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, there is very little communication and engagement between Azeris and Armenians and considerable hostile rhetoric. This appears to be a significant obstacle to political negotiations as well as more general reconciliation. Some argue that the failure of the 2001 Key West talks between the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan was that they were ahead of the own populations in understanding the need for compromise and unable to take their populations along with them in supporting a peace settlement.⁴⁸ A similar dynamic seems to operate in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, where failure to win acceptance by more conservative elements of the public in both communities was a factor undermining the Oslo Agreement. The implication is that developing broad-based public constituencies for peace can be an important feature in determining the viability of a political peace negotiation process - a function that is often undertaken by peacebuilding CSOs.

International solidarity: mobilizing a global response

Local people are often unable to address all the dimensions and drivers of conflict on their own. This

⁴⁸ See Tom de Waal. 2003. *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War*. New York: New York University Press.

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can be especially challenging when there are severe power imbalances; when there are numerous external parties to the conflict (such as powerful countries allied to one of the armed groups); or where the conflict parties are largely motivated to sustain the benefits derived from the 'war economy'. Their strategies may well require solidarity and collaboration from key partners elsewhere in the global system. This implies the need for a more systemized approach to collaboration between the civil society actors with governments and others who have an interest in or influence over the situation. This can be enhanced 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.

From practical protection to policy change: Witness for Peace in Nicaragua⁴⁹

In 1979, the leftist Sandanista insurgency movement overthrew the dictatorship of the Somoza dynasty in Nicaragua. Led by President Ronald Reagan, the U.S. government supported the Contras ('counter-revolutionaries') aiming to topple the Sandanistas by waging attacks in the countryside. They burned villages and destroyed convents, schools and hospitals, killing many civilians in the process.

In the 1980s, Witness for Peace organized visits by delegations of U.S. citizens to the country. Recognizing that the presence of foreign citizens - particularly those from their patron - deterred attacks by the Contras, the delegations effectively served as 'human shields' for the communities where they were stationed. By becoming an organized, nonviolent presence in the war zone, they operated as a citizen-led 'peace force' for the country. It seems that their presence reduced the potential extent of civilian casualties.

Witness for Peace was a coalition of concerned groups from the U.S., including mainstream churches and smaller religious communities, such as the Quakers and Mennonites, and were supported by other organizations like Peace Brigades International. They attracted volunteers from all 50 states. Upon returning home, the delegates visited local communities throughout the country to talk about their experiences and, in most cases, to advocate an end to U.S. assistance for the Contras. Every time the U.S. Congress was due to vote on another round of funding for the Contras, the Witness for Peace network sprung into action for mass lobbying and vigils outside every congressional office. The fact that the movement was nonpartisan and drawn mostly from religious people of different demographic and socioeconomic backgrounds - including older church women, business leaders, and people other than the usual peace movement stereotypes - greatly strengthened the effectiveness of both their public awareness raising and policy advocacy efforts.

They were effective in stimulating intense public debate about the U.S. government's Central America policy. The strategy contributed to the decision by the U.S. Congress to cut off military aid to the Contras. It may even have helped to avert an all-out U.S. invasion of Nicaragua. It also led countless people throughout the U.S. to engage more deeply in concern for their country's actions abroad.

Power to reduce violence & promote stability

It is very difficult for people to engage in and support peacemaking when they feel under significant threat to their basic security. This is one of the reasons why those who want to wreck a peace process tend to escalate violence targeted against civilians. While conventional state security forces can play an important role in protection; too often they are a part of the problem or are simply incapable of fulfilling their responsibilities. Military peacekeepers are often deployed too late, too few or with a mandate that is inadequate to provide sufficient protection of the civilian population.

⁴⁹ See Chapter 15.3 in van Tongeren, et al., *People Building Peace II*, op.cit.

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Yet state security forces and internationally-mandated peacekeepers are not the only ones equipped to respond to violence effectively. The violence affected populations are not merely victims of events. In many cases, they have been able to take action to prevent violence and ameliorate the effects of armed conflict. Community level structures - especially when they work in partnership with authorities and international missions - are often well placed to monitor developments and take proactive steps to de-escalate violence. In a number of places torn by violence, one of the most effective ways to address this problem is for the community to become proactively involved in trying to prevent the violence by resolving localized disputes and preventing those with specific personal grievances from mobilizing others in conflict.

It is rarely enough to try to stop the violence without also addressing the structures of the armed groups involved in waging war. These are usually addressed through some sort of negotiation process. Nevertheless, it seems that strong communities that are effective in resolving differences peacefully can be an important safeguard against those who would use violence to achieve their goals. Cooperation in helping to achieve mutual security can be a powerful confidence-building measure. The experience can also help to prepare communities for conflict resolution and peaceful co-existence in the wider society.

Power to alert and to act: early warning and early response

A key conclusion of the GPPAC process is that preventive action needs to be evidence-based, fall within a broad multi-sectoral / multi-actor integrated strategy and be owned by local communities, who are crucial to sustainable transformation of situations giving rise to armed conflict. The challenge for early warning analysis is not only to recognize the risk of violent conflict emerging or escalating; it also needs to identify what can be done, by whom and how in order to prevent violence and encourage processes to address the conflict through peaceful means.

Partnership between civil society, governments and

international actors may be crucial for creating an effective and comprehensive early warning and early response system. People based in a society and those specializing in the country / region are often best placed to identify both the reasons for a conflict, the motivations of those who are driving it, and to suggest specific actions that can be taken to shift its dynamics in a more peaceful direction. In some cases, their insights can support the development of subtle and highly targeted strategies that do not require extensive resources or coercive measures, especially when addressed at an early point in a conflict cycle. CSOs, especially women's groups, are often particularly well-suited to suggest responses for actions on the ground. Their insight should be maximized when exploring response options.

While CSOs can be the source of vital inputs shaping international responses to conflict, it is also vital to stimulate local systems for responding to the risk of violence.

Early warning and early response among pastoralist communities in Kenya⁵⁰

Pastoralist communities in Kenya have suffered frequent violent cattle raids by well-trained and heavily armed young warriors. These raids sometimes fused with other political and communal interests, leading to an escalation of tension and wider insecurity. The National Council of Churches Kenya (NCCCK), initially motivated to provide humanitarian relief for the victims of the violence, realized the need to work proactively to cease the raids and resolve wider conflicts. With support from NPI-Africa, they worked with local staff and community members to form village peace committees and a community-based early warning system.

Well in advance of any raid, numerous signs of mobilization can be identified as indicators to provide advanced warning of an attack. Many of these signs are found in traditional practices (such as special rituals and ornaments) or practical arrangements

⁵⁰ See Peter Juma Gunja and Selline Otieno Korir. 2005. "Working with the Local Wisdom: The National Council of Churches of Kenya Peace Program" in van Tongeren, et al., *People Building Peace II*, op.cit.

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(such as the presence of firearms and sale of ammunition) undertaken in preparation for a raid. As it is customary to give advance warning, the intended targets of a raid often display signs of apprehension: rumors, deserted marketplaces, and movement of family members to safer places can all signal an imminent attack. Program participants analyzed these factors to form a set of indicators that could be used to systematically detect impending raids. Using this information, they encouraged the village peace committees and other community peace structures to develop appropriate strategies and methodologies for community-based prevention efforts.

This initiative became an important part of NCKK's comprehensive program to promote peace and reconciliation at the community level and to link community based-structures with national decision-making processes by lobbying government entities on conflict resolution issues.

Many peacebuilders recognize the need to strengthen the conflict analysis capacity of local CSOs so that they will be better able to identify significant developments and suggest appropriate responses. Although local people are well placed to know what is 'really going on' at a local level and are highly sensitive to changes on the ground, they typically need to work with experienced CSOs to help them articulate it in ways that make sense to outsiders, and to link local developments to other developments in the wider context.

John Katunga, from NPI-Africa, suggests that civil society actors can play an important role in both channeling information to appropriate international and / or governmental actors and providing reassurance to local communities by disseminating accurate and reliable information about what is going on. This later role can be crucial in defusing tensions building up around alarmist rumors. It also can be a significant contribution to support confidence-building necessary to create an atmosphere where peacebuilding initiatives can take root. CSOs, however, seldom have the capacity to put pressure on other actors that are far away from them. For example, in a context like the Democratic Republic of Congo, where the foreign patrons of local

armed militias have vital influence, local peacebuilders rely on international organizations in hopes they will engage proactively in preventive diplomacy.⁵¹

If it is not done well, however, early warning analysis has the potential to be counter productive. For example, in a Central Asian country, local peacebuilding groups believe that an inter-governmental organization with a focus on conflict receives most of its information and interpretation of local events exclusively from the perspective of the government, which is not seen as an 'impartial' actor in relation to conflict in the area.⁵² Thus their conflict analysis and early warning reports do not adequately reflect the perspectives of opposition and / or ethnic minority groups. In at least one case, the agency's report itself was the trigger for an escalation in hostilities at the local level. Local peace groups believe that there would be considerable potential in joint monitoring of conflict situations so as to develop a common basis of analysis that is seen to be insightful, balanced and fair to all the parties concerned - and thus has credibility and authority in the local communities as well as for those further a field. Yet there are, as yet, few examples of routine collaboration between local CSOs and IGOs in developing early warning analysis. This is largely due to the concerns of officials in IGOs about respecting the concerns governments may have around what they may perceive as 'intelligence gathering' that may be seen as linked to early warning analysis - a highly sensitive area for many.

Crisis response, de-escalating tensions, creating oasis of stability

In contemporary forms of armed conflict, social and political violence is typically expressed in localized incidents with civilians as the main casualties or even the primary targets. Such violence often continues after a ceasefire and even despite a comprehensive peace treaty negotiated between leaders of the armed factions.

51 Interview with author, 10 August 2004. See also Catherine Barnes. *UN-CSO Interaction in Conflict-Affected Communities*, GPPAC Discussion Paper. September 2004. Available on http://www.gppac.org/documents/GPPAC/Research/UN-CS_interaction/Regional_experiences-paperCB_29Sept04.doc

52 Barnes, *UN-CSO Interaction*, op.cit.

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It is especially common during peace negotiations, when opponents of the talks want to destabilize the situation and wreck the peace process.

Violent conflicts typically infiltrate all levels of society. The state-based international system is often poorly equipped to engage effectively with people involved in localized armed violence and self-sustaining conflict dynamics at the community level. Yet community-based peace initiatives can be uniquely well placed to create strategies to enable people to co-exist with each other, especially when linked with and / or supported by larger national- and international-level processes.

Communicating in crises: the Mobile Phone Network in Northern Ireland⁵³

In 1996, North Belfast experienced a wave of violence and the breakdown in lines of communication between and within communities and with government bodies at all levels. Rumors triggered mistrust and suspicion that fuelled further violence. The rumor of a crowd gathering would encourage people onto the street. People on ‘the other side’ would then perceive the gathering group of opponents as a threat and would send out the word for reinforcements from their own community. Too often, this would trigger stone throwing that would then escalate into further violence. Staff at the local Community Development Center decided to do something to de-escalate these dynamics by creating a communication network. They identified key groups and individuals in each of the main communities willing to volunteer to maintain communication within and between neighboring communities and with the police, housing and other key government agencies. They agreed to contact other members of the network whenever rumors began to circulate, crowds gathered or incidents occurred that could be warning signs of unrest. These activists were given mobile phones so they could remain on the streets to monitor situations. Sometimes the individuals might be within meters of each other and even visible across a street, yet the tensions made it impossible for them to have direct contact. Therefore the phones provided the necessary

means for communication to resolve the situation. The phones enabled the activists to ask questions of their counterparts from the other community and then to pass this information back to their own community. This often helped them to dispel false rumors and, as needed, to find ways of diffusing the situation through informal mediation and problem solving. The phones also enabled the activists to maintain contact with the police so that community workers could be given the time and space to try to intervene and stop trouble, as the involvement of the police could be seen as inflammatory by some.

When local police commanders began to recognize the capacity of the network activists to calm tensions, they increasingly turned to them as their first point of call. During the period when the network was in operation, there was a continuing reduction in the number of serious incidents. While there were numerous factors involved in that trend - with changes in the wider political context of the peace process a crucial factor - the active participation of local community activists in responding appears to have been an important element in helping to maintain stability, thereby providing space needed for resolving the wider political conflict.

Civilian monitoring

Civil society initiatives for monitoring both human rights and specific events, such as elections, are widely known. Civil society monitoring initiatives explicitly aimed at supporting peace processes are less well known. Yet they can be uniquely influential in creating sufficient stability and space needed to underpin official political negotiations and to address the local dimensions of wider conflict contexts. They typically draw upon detailed local knowledge of the specific dynamics and developments that can trigger conflict escalation. Utilizing credible (and usually independent) monitors, they can issue information and analysis that is accepted by the conflict parties and other stakeholders. They often issue recommendations explicitly aimed at

⁵³ Based on Neil Jarman. 2005. “Managing conflicts by phone: The mobile phones network in Northern Ireland” in van Tongeren, et al., *People Building Peace II*, op.cit.

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fostering confidence building and may work with all involved to see them implemented. Their credibility often stems from the fact that they are perceived as either non-partisan or multi-partisan (e.g., comprised of people with links to all the conflict parties) and their motivation is basically humanitarian, with the interests and needs of non-combatant civilians their primary concern.

Ceasefire monitoring and support: Bantay Ceasefire in the Philippines⁵⁴

Mindanao has experienced decades of violent conflict between the Philippine government and various insurgencies struggling for greater self-determination. A network of grassroots and international civil society groups formed the Bantay Ceasefire (BC) network in 2003 to monitor a ceasefire agreement between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). The initiative grew out of collaboration between Initiatives for International Dialogue, a regional NGO, the Immaculate Conception parish, and Mindanao Peoples' Caucus, a grassroots group of the main peoples on the island, Muslims, indigenous peoples and Christians. These groups recognized the vulnerability of the ceasefire and the urgent need to do something to support the fragile peace. They then sought cooperation with national peace groups and groups from abroad, especially from South East Asia but also globally, to become a network of around 20 member groupings. This has helped to internationalize the resources available for responding to the conflict. Regional solidarity has also demonstrated that many of the peoples of South East Asia share similar problems and can also share solutions.

The BC network forms investigative teams to monitor skirmishes and reports of violations, as well as underlying systemic issues in the conflict. Before embarking, they make contact with the official monitoring body and, as relevant, with military units in the areas under investigation. Because of its independence, credibility and good networking skills, BC is able to work simultaneously through village power structures, with the Philippines armed forces and the MILF, as well as with churches, NGOs, and

government agencies operating in the area. In the field, BC teams seek the widest range of interviews and documentary evidence available, paying special attention to the experiences of civilians and to human rights violations. Their reports concentrate on documenting any violations that may have occurred, as well as making specific recommendations for protecting the truce. Reports are provided to the media, support groups, senior army officials, and the MILF. To follow-up, BC often arranges meetings with these parties to discuss the issues in greater depth. Many of their recommendations focus on ways to ameliorate the effect of army and MILF actions on civilians - such as cases where the location of camps near villages jeopardizes their security or the effects of major army campaigns on non-combatants.

With the well-being of people living in conflict areas as their primary concern, the BC network aimed to ensure it contributed to preventing the outbreak of violence as well as monitoring violations. They work at the village level to detect localized disputes that could escalate into violence. They report these developments to the official monitoring bodies and to other members of the network in order to facilitate a rapid response, including through mediation by appropriate teams from the Catholic churches and Muslim bodies. BC members have also done much to 'popularize' the ceasefire at the community level by producing explanatory pamphlets and holding informal discussion sessions. They have conducted dialogue in their communities to underpin support for permanent monitoring outposts and to implement other key recommendations. To enhance the sustainability of the network, BC has begun to train community monitors in early warning analysis and other participatory strategies to prevent the outbreak of hostilities.

In addition to monitoring formally agreed ceasefires, community monitors can become involved in activities that help to generate public confidence. These activities

⁵⁴ Based on Diomedes Eviota, Jr. 2005. "Grassroots and South-South Cooperation: Bantay Ceasefire in the Philippines" in van Tongeren, et al., *People Building Peace II*, op.cit.

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can involve monitoring developments in controversial state institutions and monitoring relations between communities.

Creating the space for long-term change: Community confidence building in Ghana

Conflicts in Ghana - as in many West African countries - are expressed as struggles between communities, with the government often seen as a partisan actor promoting the interests of their own group against the interests of others. As a result, the state is not seen as an impartial arbiter, acting on behalf of all the people of the country. The new democratic government has, however, taken important strides in trying to address the long-term socio-economic and political root causes of these problems - partly through cooperation with international development agencies. Yet it may take a considerable period of time for these efforts to bear fruit. In the meanwhile, the risk remains of re-escalation to violence that could undermine the potential for longer-term structural change. According to Emmanuel Bombande, director of the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP): “While the genuine issues are slowly being addressed, it is impossible to work on medium- to long-term issues when communities are up in arms. There is a need to slowly build confidence that change is coming and things will get better.”⁵⁵

WANEP has worked in local communities to identify strategies and resources that can be used by local civil society groups to sustain the fragile peace. In the past, a significant trigger for unrest was the treatment of local people by the police, who are seen as an instrument of a state they do not trust. To contain the potential for escalation, well-respected local CSO members now volunteer to serve as witnesses whenever a community member is arrested. They accompany the accused and stay with them while in detention and at their arraignment. This has the double effect of deterring any potential for abuse - which helps to increase the confidence of local community members - while simultaneously deterring the potential for rumors alleging abuse that can spark unrest, a contribution greatly welcomed by the police. Over time, this is helping to stabilize the

situation in the community so as to provide the needed space for longer term changes. Emmanuel Bombonde suggests that this experience demonstrates the important role that local people can play in contributing to a multidimensional and sustained peacebuilding strategy. They are a crucial element in complementing the initiatives of a range of other actors.

The kind of ‘confidence building’ role played by community volunteers in Ghana is one that has been witnessed elsewhere. For example in Northern Ireland, the Derry-based Peace and Reconciliation Group (described in more detail below) convinced the government to appoint ordinary citizen ‘lay visitors’ with the right to visit police cells at any time of day or night to ensure that detainees were properly treated. As accusations of abuse by the security forces were a major flash point in the conflict, their role was seen as valuable both by the police - who came to see that it protected them against false accusations - and by the paramilitaries, especially the IRA, who understood that it provided some protection for their members who were detained.⁵⁶ This arrangement was one part of a wider initiative to try to de-escalate tensions that could trigger renewed violence.

Interpositioning, accompaniment and civilian peacekeeping

Based on the observation that the mere presence of outside witnesses can help to deter violence in many - if not all - contexts, there has been an emergence of unarmed, civil society-based initiatives aimed at reducing political violence and protecting civilian noncombatants. While the term is controversial with some, these types of initiatives are increasingly referred to as ‘civilian peacekeeping’. As Wallis and Samoyoa explain:

⁵⁵ Interview with author, 15 August 2004. See also Catherine Barnes. *UN-CSO Interaction in Conflict-Affected Communities*, GPPAC Discussion Paper. September 2004. Available on http://www.gppac.org/documents/GPPAC/Research/UN-CS_interaction/Regional_experiences-paperCB_29Sept04.doc

⁵⁶ Diana Lampen and John Lampen “Facilitating a Mutual De-escalation Process: Quakers and the Peace and Reconciliation Group in Northern Ireland” in van Tongeren, et al., *People Building Peace II*, op.cit.

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The aim of civilian peacekeeping is to establish and maintain the minimum level of security that enables people to feel safe enough to move around, organize and take effective action to defend human rights and promote peace. Civilian peacekeeping cannot resolve a conflict or build peace but it can enable other peacemaking and peacebuilding activities to take place.⁵⁷

Civilian peacekeeping activities can include monitoring, protective accompaniment and inter-positioning - i.e., physically positioning themselves between opposing forces to prevent violent attack. Many initiatives are based on using a system of international-local contacts, with foreigners linked to locals to provide a symbolic presence indicating that the world is watching. Success often rests on perception of potential attackers that the foreigners have international linkages and this perception changes their assessment of 'cost-benefits' that could be gained by committing a violation.

Sometimes these initiatives can provide support for local people's conflict resolution efforts. For example, a Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) team accompanied a group of mothers and a local human rights activist seeking the release of children allegedly abducted as child soldiers. NP team members provided a supportive international presence while negotiations between the mothers and the insurgency leadership continued. By nightfall of the second day, 26 children were released with their bus fares home.⁵⁸ Often their work is aimed at protecting human rights defenders.

Protective Accompaniment: Peace Brigades International in Colombia⁵⁹

Peace Brigades International (PBI) aims to 'protect the protectors' and - by so doing - to enable their own protection work to continue and thus contribute to effectively opening the political space for peace and justice work to take place. In Colombia, after decades of armed conflict involving numerous armed formations, political violence is widespread. Unarmed peacemakers, human rights advocates, trade union leaders, and community activists - as well as those from vulnerable communities, such as

indigenous peoples and minority groups - have all been targeted by those who find their work threatening or unacceptable.

PBI was asked to help. Aiming to ameliorate the risk, PBI provides 'protective accompaniment' for people and communities threatened by violence. Based on the observation that the presence of foreigners at the side of intended victims can deter potential killers, international volunteers accompany those at risk. PBI's strategy is to make it known that there will be an international response to any violence witnessed by a volunteer. This requires the PBI team to maintain links with influentials at the local, national and international levels, including Colombian military and government officials, the diplomatic corps, inter-governmental organizations, UN representatives, the Catholic Church and the diplomatic corps.

Internationally, PBI operates through 18 country groups that both mobilize resources and activate a support network of parliamentarians, international NGOs, prominent church leaders and government officials. PBI mobilizes these networks to apply pressure on the Colombian government to prevent the escalation of violence, in accordance with its obligations under international human rights standards. For example, when Gabriel Torres, a human rights worker with Credhos, was detained by the army, PBI immediately began to lobby. They called the Dutch and Spanish ambassadors, who in turn called Colombia's deputy defense minister. A few hours later, Torres was released; as one soldier put it "Let him go or else we'll have those people calling us all day."

Making peace: helping to reach agreement

Negotiations leading to peace treaties to end armed conflict have traditionally been viewed as the exclusive realm of governments and the leaders of armed groups, with concerned governments and IGOs acting as

57 Tim Wallis and Claudia Samoyoa. 2005. "Civilian Peacekeepers: Creating a Safe Environment for Peacebuilding" in van Tongeren, et al., *People Building Peace II*, op.cit.

58 Global Action Agenda, Available Online: <http://www.gppac.net>

59 Based on Helen Yuill "Protecting the Protectors: Peace Brigades International in Colombia" in van Tongeren, et al., *People Building Peace II*, op.cit.

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conveners and mediators. The ‘official’ nature of these processes meant that the potential contributions of civil society and other ‘non-official’ actors were overlooked. Countless civil society peacemaking initiatives since the 1990s, however, have revealed their invaluable potential for supporting the prospects of a sustainable agreement.

As discussed above, civil society initiatives can be significant in creating a context where the parties are willing to come to the table and reach a negotiated agreement. They can help to transform hostile attitudes amongst supporters that bolster hardliners and positively demonstrate that there are, instead, important ‘constituencies for peace’. Civil society initiatives can generate pressure on the primary protagonists in armed conflict to move forward on a peace agenda and not fall back on military action. As was described in the example of the Liberian women above, this may sometimes include shaming decision-makers into engaging in peace negotiations.

Civil society can also play important roles in helping to sustain agreements reached by the parties, including through raising awareness and educating the public about the agreement itself. They can be crucial for consolidating support. In Northern Ireland peace process, for example, 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.⁶⁰

As well as helping to create a climate conducive for talks, civil society actors sometimes have a direct peacemaking role. They are often helpful in opening channels of communication between parties in conflict. Using their unofficial and low-key status, CSOs can

facilitate dialogue involving those close to government leaders and armed opposition groups. They can provide confidential ‘back channels’ and can facilitate unofficial dialogue processes - both of which provide parties the opportunity to engage in the communication necessary to determine whether political negotiations may be viable.

Unofficial civil society actors have also served as the main mediators and facilitators of formal peace negotiations. This role is more typically taken by diplomats from concerned governments or by the UN or regional organizations, who are able to contribute considerable financial resources and, in many cases, political pressure to bear on the negotiations. In certain circumstances, however, it seems that the very fact that civil society-based mediators can offer only their trustworthiness and skill is a key reason why they are acceptable when other mediators are rejected.

This provides an insight into the reasons why unofficial actors can be especially valuable in peacemaking. They typically deploy non-coercive and participatory processes to enable those involved to better understand the reasons for the conflict and what needs to be done to resolve it. Instead of relying upon an external force to exert pressure and inducements for the parties to reach an agreement and then supply the resources to help implement it, the parties must instead jointly work through the options until they are able to reach mutually acceptable arrangements. The agreements are then more likely to endure because those involved tend to understand why the compromises were necessary and why the agreement reached is the best one possible.

CSO roles in peacemaking are usually confined to processes that enable the leaders of the fighting forces to reach an agreement. Yet there are some peace processes where civil society groupings participate directly in the negotiations. Such processes are usually aimed at reaching comprehensive agreements on new state structures and other key issues at the heart of

⁶⁰ Quintin Oliver. 2002. “Developing public capacities for participation in peacemaking” in Catherine Barnes (Ed.) *Owning the Process: Public Participation in Peacemaking*. Accord 13. London: Conciliation Resources. <http://www.c-r.org/accord/peace/accord13/pedev.shtml>

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conflict. It is here that civil society can be especially invaluable because they are typically motivated more by the desire to promote sustainable change than by the quest for governing power, as is described below. Furthermore, as the ‘Geneva Initiative’ reveals, it is even possible for civil society leaders from across the conflict divide to come together to jump start a negotiation process by creating their own model agreement.

Constructing a road to peace: the Israeli-Palestinian Geneva Initiative⁶¹

The Geneva Initiative is a joint Israeli-Palestinian effort to propose a detailed model for a peace agreement to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on previous official negotiations and international resolutions. Their ‘Geneva Accord’ was negotiated by prominent Palestinian and Israeli individuals from a diverse range of backgrounds - including politics, security, business, academic, and civil society. Over two years, both teams met hundreds of times, seeking to establish whether it was possible to reconcile those issues that had prevented the sides from reaching agreement in the past.

The Geneva Initiative effort rests on 3 pillars: moving Israeli public opinion and policy, moving Palestinian public opinion and policy, and suggesting a negotiated endgame option to international policy makers and civil society. The initiative is based on the assumption that public opinion must be prepared for peace and that the leaderships must be convinced that the publics will support them if they choose the endgame peace option. Operating under the slogan ‘there is a partner; there is a plan’, their goal is to promote the prospects for peace by presenting a detailed blueprint for Israeli-Palestinian peace. They aim to prepare public opinion and leadership to be accepting of the real compromises required.

Back-channel communications between opponents

One of the challenges in beginning a process toward reaching a negotiated settlement is taking the first moves to engage with those who have been sworn enemies. Sometimes parties recognize the need for a negotiated settlement but have become trapped by the

conflict. They may need assistance to signal their willingness to enter into discussions without risking themselves. Leaders are often fearful of appearing soft or otherwise jeopardizing their position, both toward their opponent but also in relation to their own group. A common barrier is inherent suspicion of the motivations of opponents and fear that their engagement may only be a trick. These challenges indicate the crucial need to develop some form of confidence-building measures that can enable the parties to negotiate.

Individuals and groups based in civil society are sometimes in a unique position to help antagonists develop a process to de-escalate tensions and generate the beginnings of confidence in each other’s commitment to a negotiated process. Sometimes this is because they have pre-existing relationships with the primary protagonists in the conflict. Sometimes it is precisely because they are not operating in an official capacity and therefore are not threatening and, at a practical level, can easily be dismissed if their initiatives are not useful. Furthermore, as explained in the GPPAC East and Central Africa Action Agenda:

Many CSO actors are close to the conflicts that they seek to address. This proximity affords them access to information and insights that state actors may not have. ... In many instances, CSOs are more acceptable to armed and opposition groups than representatives of governments, allowing them to play a positive role.⁶²

Civil society actors - such as a religious leader, a well respected intellectual, a prominent social activist, or someone from a specialist NGO - are often able to act ‘below the radar screen’ of public awareness. They can sometimes act as a quiet intermediary and explore options or discretely deliver messages between parties. They may also work with the parties to devise formulas acceptable to all the sides on how to deepen their engagement in a negotiation process.

61 For more information, see the Geneva Initiative website <http://www.geneva-accord.org>

62 Regional Conference for Eastern and Central Africa, Nairobi Kenya, 26th-29th October 2004. Available on: <http://www.gppac.net>

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Although this function is most often undertaken by senior diplomats, civil society actors can contribute to addressing what is sometimes called the ‘security dilemma’. In conflict situations, actions often speak louder than words. Normal channels of communication have typically broken down and trust is low. Therefore members of a group in conflict generally perceive all actions by their opponents as hostile and therefore feel justified in responding with counter-actions to defend their own interests. These actions are, in turn, perceived as hostile by the other party. This cycle of response and counter-response can lead to an escalating spiral of conflict behavior that further entrenches and escalates the conflict. De-escalating moves sometimes take the form of carrying out cooperative acts or of modifying conduct that might have been viewed as threatening or hostile by the other side. This was well-illustrated by the Peace and Reconciliation Group in Northern Ireland.

A Graduated Reduction in Tensions: The Peace & Reconciliation Group in Northern Ireland⁶³

Peace and Reconciliation Group (PRG) in

Derry/Londonderry was created to find practical ways to work towards understanding and reconciliation in Northern Ireland. Group members included well connected community leaders as well as several former members of armed groups from different sides who had committed themselves to work for peace but retained contact with former associates. PRG used a variety of methods to build bridges between communities polarized by the historical and political events in Northern Ireland. In the early 1990s, in addition to its usual cross community social events, the PRG quietly engaged with leaders of the Republican and Loyalist paramilitaries and with the police and army to reduce tensions and address misunderstandings that could escalate violence.

Trust in PRG’s role had grown after it had successfully mediated between the mostly Catholic nationalist community and the police and army over accusations that the security forces were abusing their power. With the unique composition of its membership, the group also had constructive relations with local paramilitary leaders from both sides and had secured promises of ‘no first strike’, which had considerably

reduced the amount of inter-paramilitary violence in the city. Yet hostilities between the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the British security forces remained the main source of violence.

After more than a decade of armed struggle, several leading figures in the Derry branch of Sinn Féin, the political party aligned with the IRA, were seeking a way to shift the campaign into a political process. Simultaneously, the commander of the regiment of British army forces stationed in the area was seeking a way to improve relations between his soldiers and the local people.

PRG members, especially the ex-paramilitaries, began to advise local army commanders on ways they could help to reduce tensions around public order issues. However, as a shift to ‘softer’ public order tactics might make soldiers and police officers easier targets for the IRA, there was also a need for the IRA to understand and appreciate the changes being made.

Recalling the insights of Charles Osgood on methods for a ‘graduated reciprocation in tension reduction’ - otherwise known by its acronym ‘GRIT’ - formulated in connection to the nuclear weapons arms race⁶⁴, PRG considered how they could enable both sides to de-escalate the levels of violence without necessarily needing to engage directly with each other. They realized that if the IRA implicitly ‘responded’ to the British moves by NOT attacking them, then greater confidence would be generated. Two PRG members

63 Based on Diana Lampen and John Lampen “Facilitating a Mutual De-escalation Process: Quakers and the Peace and Reconciliation Group in Northern Ireland” in van Tongeren, et al., *People Building Peace II*, op.cit.

64 As the Lampens explain, this is the pattern seen in growing stockpiles of weapons during an arms race. In 1962, Charles Osgood formulated the idea of graduated reciprocation in tension-reduction. Osgood’s insight was that this escalation process could be put into reverse. While party ‘A’ may not unilaterally disarm, they can make a small reduction and wait to see whether there will be a response. If party ‘B’ reciprocates with a parallel concession, then ‘A’ can make a further move based on this ‘graduated reciprocation’. Whereas complete disarmament, for example, requires a huge amount of trust, a GRIT-based process of small but significant actions enables trust to grow as each side sees increasing evidence of the other’s peaceful intent. The most famous example of this kind of process was after decades of fruitless Strategic Arms Limitation Talks, when Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev simply made a large reduction in Soviet missiles and then waited for Western governments to respond. (Charles Osgood, 1962. *An Alternative to War or Surrender*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press.)

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discussed this strategy with the British commander and IRA leaders respectively and found them open to the idea. They drew up a list of ‘moves’ that either side could make as they began to trust the other’s intentions. For example, the army could stop indiscriminate house searches and the IRA could stop taking over people’s homes as hiding places to ambush soldiers. These moves could be made without publicity or in any way engaging in negotiations. This feature was problematic for the IRA leaders, who were wary of diminishing any strategic advantage gained by the use of violence unless there were commiserate political gains. PRG representatives countered these concerns by pointing out that it would be difficult to launch a successful political bargaining process without initial trust-building measures.

In the following period, the city witnessed a reduction by about 60 percent in the levels of violent incidents committed by these forces. This was a dramatic change in a city that had consistently ranked near the top in the number of bombings and casualties. It was nevertheless difficult to attribute these changes to the success of the GRIT formula, as neither side had announced its intentions or rationale. Yet in 1992 a senior Sinn Féin leader told a PRG member that the IRA had been implementing the moves for the past 2 years and that the army had been responding. Another explained: “We were looking for a way to move towards peace; what the PRG did was to show us the nuts and bolts of a possible process.” After the all-party negotiations process that led to the Belfast Agreement had started, a former British Army commander wrote to PRG saying: “I have thought so often that the roots of the initiative lay in Derry, which in some part showed the way (I think perhaps for the IRA as well as for the Army and others) and in that the PRG were central-in your philosophy and example and all you did to help us move forward.”

Unofficial dialogue processes: ‘Track II’ and ‘Track 1 1/2’⁶⁵

Experience from peace processes around the world reveals the importance of preparing people for change, particularly those in key roles who are involved in the

political negotiations or who influence public opinion. Quiet and unofficial dialogue processes between influential people across the lines of conflict, which either proceed or are parallel to the official negotiations, have often been helpful in supporting the human dimension of peace processes. Unofficial dialogue initiatives can help to lay solid foundations for political negotiations and contribute to creating a social environment that understands and supports such a process.

Transforming the relationship between adversaries is often necessary before a lasting cooperative relationship on functional issues can be established. Although typically a long-term and complex process, dialogue-based methods can be a powerful experience for fostering this change. Key figures in processes as diverse as Guatemala, Northern Ireland, South Africa, and Tajikistan all look back on their experience in unofficial Track II dialogue processes and in conflict resolution training workshops and claim that this experience was 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 ‘the enemy’.

Track II Dialogue is often designed accompany and enrich Track I ‘official’ negotiations. Activities through which Track II 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

⁶⁵ These terms derive from distinction made by Joseph Montville in 1981 between official, governmental actions to resolve conflicts (track one) and unofficial efforts by non-governmental professionals to resolve conflicts within and between states (track two). Many began to use the term ‘track 1 1/2’ to describe unofficial processes that involve influential members of the conflicting parties acting solely in their personal capacity (e.g., not officially ‘representing’ their party). Later, Louise Diamond coined the phrase ‘multi-track diplomacy’, recognizing that to lump all track two activities under one label did not capture the complexity or breadth of unofficial diplomacy.

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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.

Dialogue processes often involve participants connected with the political negotiations and / or those who can effect change at the grassroots level and support social reconciliation. They are typically guided by an external 'third-party' facilitator. They aim to open channels of communication, address misperceptions, develop relationships among participants, and create a forum to explore ideas and generate proposals. Unofficial dialogue processes have also contributed to the quality of negotiated outcomes by helping to identify the provisions that satisfy the important interests and needs of the parties and contribute to transforming the relationships damaged by conflict so as to lay the foundation for long-term cooperative relations. It often takes time before the ideas, relationships, and personal changes that develop through these processes manifest into significant social and political change. Often these experiences occurred prior to a sustained political negotiation process and were a factor in why negotiators could engage constructively in talks once conditions became ripe.

In some cases, Track II dialogue processes were able to 'map' the framework for a comprehensive agreement in advance of the 'official' political negotiations, as with the 'Grupo Maryland'⁶⁶ process involving Peruvians and Ecuadorians and as may well prove to be the case with the 'Geneva Accord' agreed between Israeli and Palestinian civil society leaders (see above). In others, such as the Inter-Tajik Dialogue, they were also able to help develop or test formulas that might be used to overcome obstacles to engaging in productive official negotiations.

Strengthening a Peace Process: the Inter-Tajik Dialogue⁶⁷

In comparison with many of the 'internal' wars of the late twentieth century, the inter-Tajik conflict is notable both for its rapid escalation to war in 1992 and for its relatively quick conclusion through a

negotiated settlement reached in June 1997. UN-mediated peace negotiations were complemented by the Inter-Tajik Dialogue project organized by the US-based Kettering Foundation and facilitated by a joint American and Russian team. Participants in the Dialogue, drawn generally from the second or third level of decision-making authority in their respective groupings, helped to start and then maintained involvement with the official negotiations and engaged in activities in the society at large.

The process began in March 1993, when seven individuals from different factions in the civil war sat down around a table in Moscow. At that time, they formed a unique channel of communication across factional lines. Just past the peak of violence in a vicious civil war, they could barely look at each other. During the three meetings between March and August 1993, participants in the Dialogue discussed the origins and conduct of the civil war. In the third meeting, someone commented: "What we really need to focus on is how to start a negotiation between the government and the opposition about creating conditions for refugees to go home." From this point onwards, the participants explored approaches to each key issue and developed broad conclusions about desirable ways to address problems.

In October 1993, Dialogue participants had a straightforward discussion about how to start a negotiation process. Because the opposition was ideologically diverse and geographically dispersed, it was unclear who would represent opposition forces at the negotiating table. Within two months, the leaders of different opposition factions had met in Tehran and developed a common platform that subsequently became the basis for the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) alliance. Pro-government participants questioned opposition representatives intensively about the platform at the fifth meeting in January

66 Inés Cevallos Breilh and Sahary Betancourt. 2005. "A Second Way: Grupo Maryland Between Peru and Ecuador" in van Tongeren, et al., *People Building Peace II*, op.cit.

67 Based on Randa Slim and Harold Saunders. 2001. "The Inter-Tajik Dialogue Process: From Civil War Toward Civil Society" in Abdullaev and Barnes, Eds. *The Politics of Compromise: The Tajikistan Peace Process*. Accord 10. London: Conciliation Resources. Available online: <http://www.c-r.org/accord/tajik/accord10/index.shtml>

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1994. Some of the main points in that exchange were put in writing. The pro-government participants left the meeting with the belief that the basis for negotiation now existed and promised to report to the government. One month later, the government of Tajikistan accepted an invitation to join UN-mediated peace talks.

In their sixth meeting in March 1994 - one month before the beginning of UN-mediated negotiations - Dialogue participants wrote their first document, the 'Memorandum on the Negotiating Process in Tajikistan'. This was the first of many memoranda they prepared jointly to convey ideas to the negotiating teams and the larger body politic. Once the inter-Tajik negotiations began, the Dialogue's aim was redefined as "designing a political process of national reconciliation for the country."

The Dialogue was a factor in the context that shaped the parties' willingness to engage in official talks and helped to develop a number of the formulas that were later included in the formal peace treaties. In complex political situations, it is almost impossible to identify precisely which of the many inputs bears most responsibility for changes. In this case, the government decision was taken against the backdrop of sustained diplomatic pressure to negotiate and its awareness of the escalating costs of war. Yet as was remarked by a high Tajikistani official who was involved in the government decision to negotiate: 'After six meetings of the Dialogue, it was no longer possible to argue credibly that negotiation between the government and the opposition was impossible.'

The Dialogue was an important process to bring together, in their personal capacity, people from opposing factions to discuss the conflict and ways to end it. This initiative provided a channel of communication, helped to address misperceptions about opponents, and created a forum to explore and generate ideas and proposals. It helped to develop relationships between participants - including those who took part in the negotiations and in the subsequent implementation body - and strengthened their problem-solving skills. Dialogue participants also participated in post-conflict peacebuilding and engaged in initiatives to involve the wider public in

developing approaches to address sources of tension. Thus the Dialogue provided a unique bridge between the official process and civil society and complemented the more overtly political approaches to ending the war.

Mediation / facilitation of peace negotiations

The majority of formal peace negotiations are mediated by teams of third-party diplomats from concerned governments or from the UN or a regional organization. Yet there are a number of cases where this role has been played by civil society mediators. In some situations, well-respected figures from prominent local social institutions have used their influence to convene representatives of the conflict parties. For example, In South Africa, a group of progressive business leaders from a number of large corporations formed the Consultative Business Movement (CBM) to develop an informed response to the deteriorating situation. After a series of discreet meetings with key leaders, the CBM gained credibility as a facilitator of the National Peace Accord and technical support for the constitutional negotiations - a role that was often complemented by partnership with the South African Council of Churches (SACC).⁶⁸ In Somaliland, the Council of Elders provided a forum for open discussion with all parties and acted as mediators in a broadly-based cross-clan peace conference process leading to a new political order in the break-away territory.⁶⁹

In some cases, the services of an external body are accepted by the principle protagonists in the conflict. A few NGOs specialize in this role. The Carter Center, founded by former US President Jimmy Carter, uses its unique access to heads of state and other senior leaders

68 For more information, see: Chris Spies. 2002. "South Africa's National Peace Accord: its structures and functions" in Catherine Barnes (Ed.) *Owning the Process: Public Participation in Peacemaking*. Accord 13. London: Conciliation Resources. <http://www.c-r.org/accord>. Peter Gastrow. 1995. *Bargaining for Peace: South Africa and the National Peace Accord*. Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press. Susan Collin Marks. 2000. *Watching the Wind: Conflict Resolution During South Africa's Transition to Democracy*. Washington: United States Institute of Peace.

69 Haroon Yusuf and Robin Le Mare. 2005. "Clan Elders as Conflict Mediators: Somaliland" in van Tongeren, et al., *People Building Peace II*, op.cit.

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to act as an ‘honest broker’ of peace agreements. It has notably played this role in relations between Sudan and Uganda and, together with the Organization of American States, in Venezuela. This case demonstrated a unique partnership that was able to draw upon a mixed set of institutional strengths and resources through combining civil society and inter-governmental organization capacities.

Preventive mediation: The Carter Center, OAS & UNDP in Venezuela⁷⁰

Venezuela has experienced intensifying political conflict in recent years and seemed at high risk of escalating into armed conflict. In a unique and high-profile effort to channel these conflicts through peaceful processes, the Organization of American States (OAS) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and The Carter Center - an NGO formed by former US President Jimmy Carter - have been serving as a tripartite mediation team between the main political factions. This collaboration marks an innovative experience in blending official ‘Track I’ negotiations with the flexibility and reach of unofficial ‘Track II’ methods to resolve a political crisis.

Since Venezuela President Hugo Chávez’ election in 1998 and re-election in 2000, his administration has been criticized by opposition groups for what they see as its increasingly undemocratic actions. Many in the country felt he was undermining democracy through his confrontational style and policies. Opposition parties organized mass protests and a general strike. The government and opposition groups became so polarized that the political crisis threatened Venezuela’s stability. At the invitation of the government and several opposition groups, in August 2002 The Carter Center joined the OAS and UNDP to begin a formal process to help resolve Venezuela’s political crisis.

The international tripartite working group began talks in early November 2002 between the government and opposition political and civil society groups. OAS Secretary General César Gaviria led the talks, with the advice of The Carter Center and the technical support of UNDP. President Carter had made a trip to

the country in July 2002, to lay the groundwork for negotiations. Amid those negotiations in late 2002, a two-month general strike occurred, shutting down oil production and many other businesses.

To keep communications going, the Center initiated a ‘third side’ project to identify people affected by the conflict willing to push for a peaceful resolution. The Center facilitated different levels of talks and collaborated with UNDP to hold peacebuilding seminars with civic groups and the media.

After six months of intense negotiations, the OAS and the Center helped Venezuela’s government and opposition agree on terms for a referendum on whether embattled President Chávez should step down consistent with the country’s constitution. The negotiations were highly publicized, with reports on their progress aired on the television each night. Before moving on to the steps leading to a referendum, both sides were called upon to respect human rights, freedom of expression, and the right to petition for recall referenda of elected officials. Supporters of the government and the opposition signed an accord agreeing to these rights in May 2003.

After the agreement, the Center and the OAS were invited to observe the entire recall effort. Along the way, they worked with both sides and with the electoral authorities to get consensus on the ‘rules of the game’ at each step of the process. After a long and contentious period of verifying signatures requesting a recall, frustration grew. The delay in announcing the number of validated signatures and the preliminary disqualification of many of the signatures led to massive protests in Caracas that turned violent in February 2004. Yet sufficient signatures were eventually verified, triggering a recall vote in August 2004. President Chávez won almost 60 percent of the vote, enabling him to complete the remainder of his term. While the opposition were disgruntled by the outcomes, the political crisis - and the risk of war - eased.

⁷⁰ See <http://www.cartercenter.org/peaceprograms>

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Sometimes a non-official mediator is chosen by the parties because of their pre-existing relationships and the perception that they can be trusted in this role.

Enabling peace in Mozambique: Churches & *Comunità Sant' Egidio*⁷¹

After almost three decades of devastating war, a collaborative effort by Mozambican Protestant and Catholic leaders helped bring about direct negotiations between the Frelimo government and the Mozambique National Resistance (Renamo). The negotiations were primarily mediated by the Italian lay community *Comunità Sant' Egidio* and led eventually to the formal ending of the war in 1992. The Mozambican churches began to play a constructive role in promoting peace in the early 1980s. The mostly Protestant Christian Council of Mozambique (CCM) repeatedly called for the government to engage in dialogue leading to reconciliation, for the benefit of the peoples of the country. After a series of set-backs on the battlefield, President Chissano gave cautious approval to their effort to initiate contact with Renamo to explore the possibilities for peace. Recognizing the importance of unified efforts, CCM sought collaboration with the Catholic Church. A small committee was formed, comprising two Protestant and two Catholic leaders. They jointly linked with Kenyan officials influential with the Renamo and interested in supporting negotiation efforts and sought to engage Renamo directly. Their efforts eventually enabled the government and Renamo to 'come to the table' in a negotiation process. Yet the initial attempts by various governments to mediate fell short of an agreement. The Catholic lay community, *Sant' Egidio*, had links with Mozambique dating from the 1970s. In 1990, they offered to host direct talks between the Mozambican government and Renamo. Due to its strong links with leftist Italian politicians, the Italian government and Catholic churchmen trusted by Renamo, its offer was accepted. *Sant' Egidio* went on to host all 12 rounds of the Rome talks, with two of its senior members acting first as observers and then as official mediators. Its unofficial status and its ability to support itself on voluntary contributions

gave it the freedom of informal diplomatic maneuver, which greatly assisted it role in the search for a settlement of Mozambique's war.

The talks in Rome were long and difficult. The main concern of the mediators was that, while the parties talked, Mozambicans continued to suffer and die. The churches pursued various strategies to help speed up the talks. They launched petition campaigns and public prayers for peace. These helped to draw attention to Mozambique's troubles and the European Community applied pressure on the parties to quickly reach an agreement. They also reminded the delegations that their people's suffering continued. Church leaders also worked closely with the American ambassadors to Mozambique and the Holy See, as well as with the governments of Kenya and Zimbabwe, to keep the parties focused on the difficult issues at hand.

Some were critical of *Sant' Egidio*'s rigorously non-judgmental approach and the long delay in reaching a credible ceasefire. In the final analysis, however, the mediators provided a genuinely 'impartial' environment that was essential for the parties to settle their differences and reach a political accommodation. *Sant' Egidio*'s success at the Rome talks stemmed in large part from their close links to the Mozambican parties, as well as their skill and patience. This significantly enhanced their ability to keep the peace process on track, despite the regular breakdown of talks between the government and Renamo. They understood that the process could not be accelerated by issuing ultimatums as they had no force to back them up; similarly they could not offer the incentive of funds (what has been termed a strategy of 'buying' peace) because they were not a donor. Instead, *Sant' Egidio*'s modest claim that it offers no prescriptions but seeks to create opportunities for the negotiators to find solutions themselves is perhaps one key reason why the 1992

71 Based on: (1) Dinis S. Sengulane and Jaime Pedro Goncalves. 1998. "A calling for peace: Christian leaders and the quest for reconciliation in Mozambique" in Armon, Hendrickson and Vines, Eds. *The Mozambican Peace Process in Perspective*. Accord 3. London: Conciliation Resources. Available on: <http://www.c-r.org/accord/moz/accord3/index.shtml>; and (2) chapter 21.1 in van Tongeren, et al., *People Building Peace II*, op.cit.

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Mozambican peace settlement continues to hold today.

Direct participation in peace negotiations

The prevalent strategy for negotiations to end internal wars is to bring together the representatives of the combatant groups (governments and armed insurgencies) - typically with the assistance of an international mediator and often behind closed doors in a foreign location - to reach an agreement that satisfies at least the minimum demands of the negotiators. Many wars have ended through this approach. Yet it rarely provides opportunities for those who did not take up arms - including other political groupings, organized civil society or the wider public - to have a voice in shaping the agreements or endorsing them. Nor does the process itself help to strengthen democratic forms of decision-making or provide space for different social and political groupings to jointly make agreements to address the issues that divide them.

Although the end of hostilities is likely to be met with widespread feelings of relief, some may feel alienated from an agreement that is not 'theirs'. This is a particular concern in situations where the government and the armed groups lack a strong support base within society and thus neither is seen as legitimate representatives of public interests. It may also be the case if 'enlightened leaders' reach a deal that goes beyond the realm of what is acceptable to more conservative public opinion. Alienation may also be intensified if the agreement is seen as more about 'dividing the spoils' between those willing to use violence to access power than about promoting social inclusion and equitable development. All too often, the implicit message from the process is that violence pays.

Although groups in civil society may have the insights and capacities needed to propose ways to address these changes, it is rare that they are able to exercise this potential. Local civil society is typically disempowered by standard practice in negotiation processes and by the prevalent paradigm that sees governments and leaders of armed groups as the only parties relevant to political negotiations. There are alternatives to this 'elite pack-

making' paradigm of peacemaking when the process includes mechanisms for public participation. Such mechanisms engage people from different sectors and identity-groups to deliberate the substantive and procedural issues addressed in the negotiations. This may be especially effective if the processes unfold in the 'public sphere' so that wider audiences are aware of the process and have opportunities to contribute.

There are a number of processes, including in 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.⁷² In so doing, they were able to influence the shape of the negotiation process; the issues addressed on negotiating agenda; the substantive agreements reached and their implementation. The talks process was brought further into the public sphere. This enabled a wider range of people to contribute suggestions and follow the negotiations - including women and those from marginalized groups. The Guatemalan peace process, described previously, illustrates the constructive influence that civil society-led mechanisms can exert on influencing the negotiation agenda as well as developing formulas for the substantive agreements.

With greater transparency of the negotiation process and the peace agreements, the public may be better able to understand and potentially accept the reasons for the compromises reached. Furthermore, they may potentially mark a historic moment of change and help to establish the value of public debate and democratic processes as the legitimate response to conflict.

Institutionalizing a political voice & ensuring representation: The Northern Ireland Women's Coalition⁷³

The modern 'troubles' in Northern Ireland started in the late 1960s. By the mid-1990s, it was increasingly recognized that the conflict could not be won through

⁷² For detailed case studies and analysis, see Catherine Barnes (Ed.) *Owning the Process: Public Participation in Peacemaking*. Accord 13. London: Conciliation Resources. <http://www.c-r.org/accord/peace/accord13/index.shtml>

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military means. After decades of various peace initiatives and growing cooperation between the British and Irish governments to sponsor joint negotiations, a process for all-party talks began in June 1996. For the first time it was based on the assumption that ‘if you are a part of the problem, then you need to be part of the solution’. Representatives to the talks were chosen through public elections in order to include parties associated with paramilitary groups in formal political negotiations. Although there were no specific arrangements for other organized sectors of society to participate, this electoral system allowed a group of women rooted in civil society to gain seats at the table. They became a channel for bi-communal civil society involvement in the official peacemaking process.

The Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition (NIWC) was initiated by women with long histories of engagement in civil, workers’ and human rights and included unionists and nationalists, as well as those who did not define themselves in either of these categories. They felt it necessary to take the gigantic step from the non-governmental sector to the political arena because they believed that the incumbent political leaders either ignored or refused to take seriously the issue of women’s representation and participation in the peace negotiations. They first lobbied for the existing political parties to include women in their candidate lists. When this action was effectively ignored, they decided to form a political grouping to contest the elections.

Not all women’s groups supported this idea. Some believed it would be difficult to sustain the bi-communal nature of the coalition on contentious issues because cooperation would require too many compromises. Despite these concerns, the NIWC attracted support from most groups. Frequent open meetings were held in Belfast to debate positions. Equality, human rights and inclusion were adopted as the NIWC’s three core principles and they committed to use these principles to guide and evaluate their policy positions.

Their strategy was to organize women through all their various networks and contacts to gain the necessary threshold of votes. Other parties and the media

initially dismissed the NIWC. Yet it gained one per cent of the vote and finished as the ninth most popular political party. It thus secured two seats in the negotiations, where its delegates had the status of full participants. At the negotiations, the NIWC was careful to ensure that both nationalist and unionist women were at the table at all times.

The NIWC worked to promote an inclusive process and to prevent delegates getting drawn into a destructive spiral of blame that could harm the general negotiation ethos. They concentrated initially on making recommendations for procedural issues. They were sensitive to how these matters linked with process issues and were attentive to the underlying relationships between participants. They were later able to broaden the negotiating agenda to include such issues as victims’ rights and reconciliation. The NIWC produced high-quality position papers and tried to model a fresh approach to politics based on cooperation, non-competitiveness and a willingness to share ideas.

They remained true to their NGO roots and kept their feet firmly in both the world of electoral politics and in the world of public activism. At monthly meetings of the full membership, they discussed positions on forthcoming agenda items and provided information to the membership about developments in the political process. Members informed the representatives of their perspectives on the process. Because their membership was bi-communal, they provided guidance on approaches acceptable to either or both communities. NIWC also maintained regular contact with a range of community and NGO leaders on specific issues under discussion. The NIWC gave serious consideration to the views of those consulted. Inputs from both the membership and these networks meant that the NIWC positions could command cross-community support. It brought solutions to the table that recognized and worked to accommodate difference, instead of throwing up obstacles based on those differences. The NIWC’s involvement ensured that the issue of

73 Extracted from: Kate Fearon. 2002. “Institutionalizing a political voice & ensuring representation: The Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition” in Catherine Barnes (Ed.) *Owning the Process: Public Participation in Peacemaking*. Accord 13. London: Conciliation Resources. <http://www.c-r.org/accord/peace/accord13/nor.shtml>

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women's political participation was placed firmly on the map of electoral politics. Women delegates from other political parties began to attain higher profiles within their parties. The NIWC's involvement also demonstrated the possibility that civil society can participate in and influence formal political negotiations. It revealed that politics is not necessarily the exclusive preserve of customary politicians; groups other than those advocating exclusively a nationalist or exclusively a unionist perspective also have a place at the decision-making table.

After deliberating for 22 months, the negotiators concluded the Belfast Agreement in April 1998. Before it could take effect, however, it had to be endorsed through a public referendum. Some of the issues the NIWC put on the agenda - such as victims' rights and reconciliation - became touchstone issues in the referendum campaign. It is arguable that if the agreement had not addressed these concerns, many people could have voted against it.

The NIWC played a key role in promoting the Agreement. Few parties were as unequivocal in their support and no other political party worked as closely with civil society leaders to secure endorsement. The NIWC was able to speak simultaneously to a number of constituencies: nationalist and unionist, organized civil society and individual members of the public. Members helped prepare a 'user friendly' version of the Agreement, using plain speech to make it more comprehensible. NIWC representatives spoke at public debates and organized debates amongst their own members. The NIWC supported the civil society-led "Yes" Campaign. As a political party, NIWC was entitled to free postage for sending a piece of literature to every voter. They put their own message on one side and gave the "Yes" Campaign the other side to print with its own message and logo. The referendum on the Belfast Agreement was passed by 72 per cent of the Northern Ireland electorate - an event of massive historical and political significance.

While it is not explicitly intended to open the door to civil society involvement in peace negotiations, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security recognizes the right of women to

participate in a decision-making capacity in peace negotiations. This has provided an opening for women based in civil society organizations to demand a voice. Femmes Africa Solidarité has pointed out however that:

"Although various international declarations and conventions call for increased involvement of women in peace negotiations, African women continue to be sidelined in this area. They have proven they can negotiate through participation in MARWOPNET and other regional peace processes, but even when organized and prepared they find it hard to secure necessary funds to attend negotiations. When they do obtain financial backing, they have trouble receiving accreditation. When they get accreditation, other participants tend not to take them seriously."⁷⁴

As they point out, there are cases where women based in civil society have secured their access to the negotiating table through determined advocacy. The Northern Ireland Women's Coalition provides a prime example of the ways that a civil society-based women's voice can help to influence the process and the outcomes of negotiations. The fact that these examples are the exception rather than the norm indicates the need to invest in civil society involvement in peace processes and to take their contributions seriously.

Pragmatic peace: community-level peacemaking

Many initiatives - especially those undertaken by civil society peacebuilders - are aimed at peacebuilding at the local community level. Protracted armed conflict within states generally penetrates all levels of society. Regional and / or national-level conflict dynamics interconnect with self-sustaining conflict dynamics at the local community level. In some cases, continued violent conflict at the community level generates centrifugal pressure towards greater chaos, undermining efforts at macro-level peacemaking. Conversely, effective conflict prevention and peacemaking locally can underpin

74 Femmes Africa Solidarité. 2005. "Engendering the Peace Processes in West Africa: The Mano River Women's Peace Network" in van Tongeren, et al., *People Building Peace II*, op.cit., p592

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macro-level peace processes and pave the way towards sustainable reconciliation by addressing specific grievances, repairing relationships and creating sufficient stability so that wider political processes towards peace can take hold.

In this context, the efforts of local people acting at the community level can be crucial for changing the dynamics of the conflict. This is an important arena for fostering a pragmatic peace through arrangements that enable them to co-exist based on awareness of their interdependence, especially if they have nowhere else to go.⁷⁵ Sometimes they are able to foster 'islands of peace' amidst a wider context of war. Sometimes they address volatile local dynamics that could escalate into violence and intensify conflict and war in the wider society. Often they are connected to efforts to make a practical difference in the daily lives of people of the community. They help to address manifestations of both structural and overt violence by developing peaceful processes to deliberate common problems and projects to promote more equitable development. These initiatives sometimes have a demonstration effect when people in other communities see what is being achieved and are inspired to launch their own initiatives.

Community-based mediation and monitoring structures

One of the principle goals of community-based peacebuilding is to help prevent violence and promote development by creating structures and systems for responding to conflict and building peace at the very local level.

Systematic responses to local conflicts: Bo Peace and Reconciliation Movement in Sierra Leone⁷⁶

In a context where discrimination and exclusion are widespread, where state institutions have been weak to non-existent and arms are plentiful, something happening in a household setting can quickly get out of hand and result in armed violence. Sierra Leoneans, with support from international partners such as Conciliation Resources, have organized a 'peace monitoring' system for community-based conflict identification, mediation and, in some cases,

adjudication. The peace monitors of the Bo Peace and Reconciliation Movement (BPRM) are a community-based group of volunteers who, with the consent of the community, approach and engage people involved in conflict. They respond not only to conflicts that have already become violent but also ones that are below that threshold. They consider nothing too small or insignificant to merit their attention. This inclusiveness has been very important for the effectiveness of their work and the credibility of the process in the eyes of local people. Over eight years of practice, the BPRM has evolved a systematic methodology out of their experience of what works.

After a conflict has come to their attention, BPRM sends in a group of volunteers who are considered to be peers of those who are involved in the conflict. For example, when working on what appears to be a domestic conflict, they send a woman and a man of an appropriate age, people who might have links through doing the same kind of work, or through belonging to the same religious community. This enables those involved in the conflict to choose the person or people with whom they want to build-up a link of confidence. Once relationships have been established with the different parties, the problem is discussed in a small group. As the parties move from talking about their grievances to discussing their ability to come together in agreement, the discussion is shifted into ever larger groups, until it reaches a critical threshold and becomes a public process. This system works well in a context where people are accustomed to agreements made publicly, involving witnesses from the wider community, rather than relying on written contracts.

The composition of the peace monitor teams is an important factor in their success. It enables them to reach across gender, age and economic divides. It has also empowered women and younger people,

⁷⁵ The phrase 'pragmatic peace' and its meaning were first introduced to me by Ibrahim Ag Youssof, one of the main instigators and facilitators of the Malian peace process described below.

⁷⁶ Based on Michael Hammer, workshop presentation, delivered Committee for Conflict Transformation Support meeting "Pacification or Peacebuilding? Defence, Foreign Policy and Conflict Transformation", CCTS Review No.30, March 2006. Available online: <http://www.ccr.org/ccts>

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including teenagers, to play a mediating role traditionally reserved for elder men. It means young people are involved in the process, rather than feeling that it is another manifestation of generational power play.

Political leaders have increasingly recognized the possibilities of this approach. For example BPRM has been asked to mediate in conflicts over chieftaincy positions, including that of a paramount chief, and in land conflicts involving vast resources. Political actors also seek advice and help to sort out who has the right to put up a candidate for the chieftainship position and about the appropriate time to go public about it. While the dynamics of a political contest remain, there is greater recognition that it should result not in confrontation but in a joint solution. As these dynamics were a significant factor in the escalation of war in the 1990s, this shift is important for preventing the recurrence of armed conflict. It also suggests that a system that works successfully at the small scale can be useful at a wider level, where the stakes are often higher. A challenge for the future will be to clarify the interface between peace monitoring and the role of the re-emerging state institutions, so that there is cooperation and complementarity rather than rivalry.

The experience of community-based conflict resolution was echoed in South Africa. The National Peace Accord, agreed by all the main parties, provided a series of institutional structures aimed at fostering processes to resolve conflicts at the local, regional and national levels in ways that complemented the formal political negotiations.

Preventing Violence: South African National Peace Accord Structures⁷⁷

When rapidly escalating violence threatened the negotiations to bring an end to the apartheid regime, the South African political parties engaged in a process to reach an agreement on initiatives to investigate the causes and seek to end the violence. The National Peace Accord created structures at the national, regional and local levels. At the national level, there were investigations into allegations of the

involvement of state security forces and political parties in the violence - and an agreement on a new 'code of conduct' to guide their behavior. One of the most striking things was the development of local and regional 'peace committees' who tried proactively to prevent the escalation of conflict in their communities and regions by mediating conflicts, monitoring demonstrations and other activities that might degenerate into violence, and supporting long-term peacebuilding. The committees coordinated their work with the political parties and with the security forces and held them accountable for their actions. Tens of thousands of South Africans became involved in activities at the local and regional levels. In so doing, they began to learn ways of mediating their differences and resolving conflicts that affect them.

Localized peace agreements

Peacemaking goes far beyond reaching a political agreement between the leaders of the main parties; often it is valuable to make peace between those who live side-by-side and experience the conflict first hand but 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. These agreements rarely have any formal legal status and are generally reliant upon those involved to voluntarily implement - often backed by considerable peer pressure by other community members. Yet it is precisely because community members realize that it is in their own self-interest to find a way to live together peacefully that these outcomes can be so durable.

⁷⁷ For more information, see: Chris Spies. 2002. "South Africa's National Peace Accord: its structures and functions" in Catherine Barnes (Ed.) *Owning the Process: Public Participation in Peacemaking*. Accord 13. London: Conciliation Resources. <http://www.c-r.org/accord>. Peter Gastrow. 1995. *Bargaining for Peace: South Africa and the National Peace Accord*. Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press. Susan Collin Marks. 2000. *Watching the Wind: Conflict Resolution During South Africa's Transition to Democracy*. Washington: United States Institute of Peace.

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Towards a pragmatic peace: localized peacemaking in Northern Mali⁷⁸

From 1990 to 1996, Mali experienced a separatist war in the north. Initially mobilized through regional solidarity amongst northerners, the conflict slowly fragmented along inter-ethnic lines and violence tore apart inter-dependent communities. Attempts to address the overall political conflict began in 1991, with government-sponsored initiatives to reach an acceptable negotiated solution with the armed groups. Yet the negotiated agreements between government representatives and the armed factions were unable to bring the conflict to a conclusion. Instead, the initial negotiations actually exacerbated the conflict dynamics. Although later talks created the political terms for peace, without the involvement of local guarantors of the settlement at the community level, implementation floundered and peace remained elusive on the ground. It was only when thousands of people throughout the north engaged directly in inter-community peacemaking that the path to national reconciliation opened. The involvement of those most affected by the conflict in open and inclusive decision-making meetings was able to achieve what official political negotiations could not: a transformation of the conflict and consolidation of peace.

This began in late 1994, when the village chief of Bourem initiated the first inter-community meeting. Nomad chiefs from across the area gathered and agreed to contribute to peace by motivating the people under their influence. These traditional leaders succeeded in bringing their constituencies along with them. This initiative sparked a number of similar meetings based on activating traditional conflict resolution methods. The main result of these initial meetings was to create localized ceasefires between the armed movements, ending the organized violence by late April 1995. Civil society had managed to put an end to the insurgency and succeeded where the army, the movement leaders and the government had all failed. Yet combatants and civilians remained heavily armed - with some turning to banditry as their livelihood - and social and economic life was dysfunctional. Fear was widespread and

approximately 150,000 refugees remained abroad. Clearly many issues had to be addressed to develop a lasting peace.

Despite bringing violence to a halt, local communities were unable to proceed to the next phase. Up until this point the meetings had been self-initiated. But the time was ripe for external guidance in order to proceed from an objective of stopping the violence to a more creative goal. A small group of experienced civil society leaders formed a facilitation group to provide guidance for locally-led initiatives. They elaborated a strategy for managing the current situation based on experiences of adapting traditional skills for peacemaking. The facilitation group emerged out of a partnership between local actors and Norwegian Church Aid.

They fostered 'inter-community meetings' between people who shared the same territory, were dependent on the same resources and shared the same market place, so that they could discuss the problems caused or aggravated by the war. This organizing principle ignored the official administrative subdivisions created in the colonial era that were designed to divide and control previously strong and inter-dependent communities. As there was no official or other obvious leadership structure on this level, the facilitation group selected organizers for each inter-community meeting based on an assessment of the host's integrity, position in the area and capacity to convene such a meeting. This was important because the glue that binds society together in Mali is personal relations and trust; people do not deal with a 'representative of something' but rather with a person. The facilitation group developed a list of problems stemming from the war and asked the communities to develop generally accepted solutions so that their economic and social life could function again. They cautioned the communities to avoid discussing issues where the solution was not within their control, as it would divert the discussion from the main issues and led to disempowered frustration.

⁷⁸ Extracted from Kåre Lode. 2002. Mali Feature Study. in Catherine Barnes (Ed.) *Owning the Process: Public Participation in Peacemaking*. Accord 13. London: Conciliation Resources. <http://www.c-r.org/accord>.

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Each meeting was attended by between 300 and 1,800 people. The meetings were typically opened by a plenary session with formal speeches, a presentation of the outline of the procedures, and selection of members for the topical commissions. Each commission consisted of 10-30 members charged with formulating proposals on the main topic areas, which would then be subject to approval or modification at the final plenary meeting.

Although there were variations in the conclusions of the different inter-community meetings, the overall pattern was surprisingly similar. There was overwhelming agreement that the authority of the state should be restored based on the principles of equality and justice. The process of talking together and developing shared proposals helped to break down the wall of distrust between groups and individuals. In most places, there were also significant practical outcomes. Market places reopened immediately; armed robbery was dramatically reduced; and numerous combatants were convinced that the peace was real and consequently joined the demobilization camps and turned in their weapons. In many areas, inhabitants began to implement the new strategies for resolving long-standing community disputes, thus significantly reducing tensions.

Mali's experience demonstrates that significant peacemaking work can take place in localities. The process of engaging local people can at times result in sustainable agreements to address popular concerns and help to transform social divides. Yet it can be difficult to translate these developments to the national level. Furthermore, deterioration in national processes can negatively influence these localized developments. In some cases, however, it has been possible to develop a space at the local level for mass participation in peacemaking. In Colombia, REDEPAZ was formed as a national network of peace initiatives with focus on establishing local peace communities. In a context where civilian populations are frequently massacred, some localities have chosen to declare 'neutrality' and pro-actively resist the activities of both the armed revolutionaries and the right-wing paramilitaries. These

communities are forming national networks of resistance to the war.

Local 'sovereignty' & local peace: Mogotes, Colombia⁷⁹

For more than forty years, Colombia has experienced armed conflict that has often engulfed local communities in violence and generated profound social polarization. In a context where national level efforts to address the conflict have failed to halt violence, citizens of the northeastern town of Mogotes sought to address these challenges by developing local-level strategies for public participation in ending violence and creating a new political culture in their town. Their efforts had impact far beyond their own immediate surroundings. Amongst the first of the 'zones of peace' to be established in Colombia, the experience of creating new structures of local government in Mogotes has been a source of inspiration to communities who have replicated similar processes in their own municipalities.

In late 1987, Mogotes was occupied by one of the armed revolutionary groups, who held the mayor hostage. Residents met subsequently in small groups to analyze the problems encountered in their town. They identified poverty, violence and administrative corruption as the main issues. With support from the local bishop, they decided to organize a Municipal Constituent Assembly comprised of 260 delegates, each of whom represented a small zone. The assembly developed a plan to address key issues and resulted in a greatly empowered citizenry. They first negotiated the release of the kidnapped mayor, who was widely seen as corrupt. They then forced him to resign by applying concerted pressure based on non-violent direct action, such as silent marches, prayer vigils, and a popular referendum that revealed almost unanimous agreement that he must step down. They later developed a plan to promote integral

⁷⁹ Based on Monseñor Leonardo Gomez Serna. 2005. "Mogotes Municipal Constituent Assembly: activating 'popular sovereignty' at a local level" in Catherine Barnes (Ed.) *Owning the Process: Public Participation in Peacemaking*. Accord 13. London: Conciliation Resources. Available on <http://www.c-r.org/accord/peace/accord13/mogotes.shtml>

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development and improved public administration. They continue to hold local officials accountable for delivering on these priorities. They have also helped to create consensus for peaceful resolution of the war in a community that had been ideologically divided. The central government was initially suspicious of their activities, thinking them inspired by the guerrillas. Many activists were threatened by paramilitaries. Yet after the bishop met with the president, he condoned their efforts. This enabled them to facilitate dialogue at a local level between the army, the insurgents, and local officials. Although the people of Mogotes have gone a long way towards promoting peace locally, they are still surrounded by armed groups and the government has not provided sufficient investment in the social capital of the community so as to address the underlying issues that generate conflict.

Transformation: addressing the causes & consequences of conflict and creating peaceable & just relationships

Addressing the structural causes and consequences of conflict

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. Sustained financial, technical, and political commitments are necessary to transform these conditions. Determined government efforts combined appropriate international aid is needed to facilitate the rehabilitation of war-affected communities and help ensure that a 'peace dividend' is widely experienced. This can be strengthened through the involvement of local and international CSOs in policy analysis as well as program implementation and service delivery. Ultimately, however, it requires government commitment to policies that will create structures and conditions that are more capable of equitably meeting the needs of all. Civil society can play an important role in generating the political will to shore up this commitment.

Post-war peacebuilding typically requires more than 're-building', as the former system is likely to have been

marred by structural inequalities and discrimination that gave rise to the conflict in the first place. As Junne and Verkoren⁸⁰ make clear, simply recreating pre-conflict structures - which for many seems the most obvious action after a war - may contribute to prolonging the conflict (or even restarting the violence) rather than solving it. Peacebuilding processes need to find ways to alter the balance without estranging those who lose from it by offering them an alternative. Local civil society, often supported by their international partners, can play a crucial role in promoting this structural transformation over the longer term and in helping to address ongoing conflicts over developmental priorities through peaceful processes.

Demilitarizing minds, healing psyches and fostering reconciliation

While addressing the practical needs is imperative for sustainable peace, transforming conflict-impaired relationships can require even more complex processes that enable people to reclaim their dignity and foster empathy across conflict divides. This may involve parties fully acknowledging their responsibility for abuses they committed and taking steps to address past and continuing injustices. It also requires a shift in the attitudes and cognitive frames that enabled and sustained the conflict; a shift from seeing the 'other' as enemy -implicitly questioning their membership in the human community - to perceiving them as fellow human beings with whom one can, at a minimum, co-exist. Although such transformation may not be necessary to ensure a formal end to war, the failure to do so can mean that underlying conflict dynamics remain unresolved, potentially creating the seeds for future discord.

While governments can - and should - take a leadership role in fostering reconciliation, this involves a transformation of the 'hearts and minds' of those who have been touched by the conflict and, as such, cannot be engineered. These changes can be triggered by the authentic initiatives of civil society actors, who rely

⁸⁰ Junne, Gerd and Willemijn Verkoren. 2004. *Post-conflict Development: Meeting New Challenges*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner.

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essentially on creativity to generate experiences that allow people to connect across divides and to spark changes in perceptions.

This often involves activating cultural traditions and spiritual resources that touch upon the deepest sources meaning for those affected by conflict. For example, in predominantly Buddhist Cambodia, monks have led an annual *Dhammayietra* ('pilgrimage of truth') peace walk throughout the war ravaged country that has involved tens of thousands of Cambodians who either join the pilgrims in the walk or greet them along the way. Bearing a message of compassion, they help to generate critical mass within the population aware of alternate responses to the violence that has penetrated the society for decades. Motivated by the teachings and leadership of Maha Ghosananda, the pilgrimage aims to manifest compassion and so foster reconciliation. According to Ghosananda:

"It is a law of the universe that retaliation, hatred and revenge only continue the cycle and never stop it. ... Reconciliation does not mean that we surrender rights and conditions but rather that we use love. Our wisdom and our compassion must walk together. Having one without the other is like walking on one foot; you will fall. Balancing the two, you will walk very well, step by step."⁸¹

A process of reconciliation typically requires an honest reckoning with the past. The preconditions for transformative reconciliation are within the process of bearing witness to what has happened: of finding ways to voice that which has been silenced and to reclaim dignity out of humiliation. While civil society groups are not able to administer formal legally-based justice, they can ensure that abuses are acknowledged and help to promote other ways of developing restorative justice.⁸²

As John Paul Lederach points out, reconciliation is not 'to forgive and forget' but 'to remember and to change'.⁸³ This suggests importance of acknowledgement and the need to understand the past, as well as to bring to justice those who committed

abuses. Civil society groups have often found ways of fostering truth-telling processes and ensuring that the past is not simply hidden behind a wall of denial. Initiatives can range from documentation projects and academic studies, to theatre and other artistic and literary projects, to memorials and symbolic or ritual expressions of grief, atonement and recognition of those who suffered. All these forms can provide access points that enable people to remember and to engage with the past.

Sometimes there is a need to directly address the painful experiences of war and to break down the walls of silence that can imprison those affected. In addition to psychosocial counseling and practical support for survivors, there artistic or spiritual experience can provide the catalyst for transformation. Lederach describes the epiphany that can emerge during - as he puts it - the 'artistic five minutes': "*When it is given space and acknowledged as something far beyond entertainment, [it can accomplish] what most of politics has been unable to attain: It helps us return to humanity, a transcendent journey that, like the moral imagination, can build a sense that we are, after all, a human community.*"⁸⁴ The following examples from Sierra Leone illustrate these dynamics.

81 Quoted in van Tongeren, et al., *People Building Peace II*, op.cit., p.234

82 Restorative justice is a response to crime that focuses on restoring the losses suffered by victims, holding offenders accountable for the harm they have caused, and building peace within communities. Restorative justice takes many different forms, but all systems have some aspects in common. Victims have an opportunity to express the full impact of the crime upon their lives, to receive answers to any lingering questions about the incident, and to participate in holding the offender accountable for his or her actions. Offenders can describe why the crime occurred and how it has affected their lives. They are given an opportunity to make things right with the victim-to the degree possible-through some form of compensation. See: <http://www.restorativejustice.org/intro/tutorial/definition>

83 John Paul Lederach. 2005. "The Arts and Peacebuilding: Using Imagination and Creativity" in van Tongeren, et al., *People Building Peace II*, op.cit., p284.

84 Ibid. p.285

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Transforming the legacies of war through arts and media: Peacelinks and Operation Fine Girl in Sierra Leone⁸⁵

Over fifty thousand people died during the decade of civil war that wracked Sierra Leone from 1992-2002. Civilians were brutalized by massive human rights violations that left a widespread legacy of trauma. Thousands of women were abducted, raped and/or forced into slavery by soldiers on both sides of conflict. As in many societies, women victimized by sexual violence were often blamed for the crime - a crime often ignored both in official political and legal institutions and in society. Many survivors felt shamed and silenced by the stigma surrounding their experience.

WITNESS, an international human rights NGO, working closely with local activists, set out to document the war's impact on young women. They created a film, *Operation Fine Girl*, centered around the personal stories of four young women and the testimony of a former child soldier, who explain to the viewers what happened to them and create a powerful testimony challenging the silence. The film underlines how all the individual cases of sexual brutality combine to cause profound and lasting damage to society as a whole.

Screened in communities throughout the country - sometimes to audiences of five to six hundred people - the film has sparked discussion and opened space to address this painful legacy of war. Seeing people like themselves share their stories enabled community members to start discussing their own experiences, helping to address some of the isolation and divides created by war. In some cases, it has encouraged participants to testify before the truth and reconciliation commission or the war crimes special court. The film was used as an advocacy tool to petition officials from these bodies to include the issue of sexual violence in their investigations. It has been used in trainings for prosecution teams and other service professionals to raise awareness of the need to better address gender issues and the larger psychosocial impacts of war. It has helped to sensitize traditional leaders responsible for administering customary law, which too often ostracizes the victims

of sexual violence. The courage of the interviewees to candidly share their personal stories in a way that resonated with thousands of others across the country - and the insight of the NGOs to reveal these experiences through the vivid and accessible medium of documentary film - has helped to encourage Sierra Leoneans to engage with a painful past and to begin the process of shifting deeply entrenched attitudes towards sexual violence and the status of women.

Many Sierra Leonean children and youth were caught up in the war as either forced or naïve recruits for the fighting forces. They became both victims and perpetrators of violence and abuses. A group of young Sierra Leoneans were motivated to draw upon their society's rich tradition of artistic expression to help themselves and other young people overcome their trauma, to 'deglamorize' warfare and violence, and to foster new skills leading to productive lives for war affected youth. One of the main outreach methods has been musical performances and artistic exhibitions. Drawn mainly from ex-child combatants and children displaced and / or mutilated by war, they are able to demonstrate the possibility of reconciliation and renewal. As the Peacelinks' founder explains: "By bringing ex-child combatants to communities they once terrorized and where they were now both feared and loathed, the outreach provided a platform for war-affected children to present their side of the story. As musicians, dancers and visual artists giving something back to these communities, the children could begin traveling the road to recovery and acceptance. ... By transforming ex-child combatants from agents of destruction to messengers of peace and by nurturing their talents and honing their skills, the organization helps change society's negative perception and morbid fear of war affected children. ... As people came to understand that these children were as much victims as they were perpetrators, they slowly let go of their misconceptions."

⁸⁵The description of Peacelinks is based on Vandy Kanyako "Using Creative arts to Deglamorize War: Peacelinks in Sierra Leone" and the description of *Operation Fine Girl* is based on Sam Gregory "Operation Fine Girl Exposes Sexual Violence: WITNESS in Sierra Leone", both in van Tongeren, et al., *People Building Peace II*, op.cit.

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The need for justice in times of transition and historically is especially challenging. Until the creation of the International Criminal Court in the late 1990s (in itself the product of a productive partnership between sympathetic governments and human rights NGOs⁸⁶), there was little recourse to justice for even the most extreme war crimes and crimes against humanity if states were unwilling or unable to prosecute. Sometimes governments are unwilling to create an official body to investigate the past - or there are concerns that the body that has been created will not address crucial issues. Where politicians are unwilling to grapple with the difficult implications of dealing with the past and delivering justice, there have been a number of efforts to fill the gap by non-state actors - such as the church-led investigations into the history of abuses in Brazil and Guatemala, as described above. CSOs have also led countless campaigns to end what is often called a 'culture of impunity' in which those who committed violations have never been called to account for their actions.

Yet the practical and moral dilemmas involved in administering transitional justice in situations where huge numbers of people are accused of crimes can be daunting. In some cases, governments have turned to traditional social institutions and practices to help administer transitional justice within communities. For example, Rwanda's Gacaca courts are an adapted form of community justice used in the wake of the 1994 genocide, when more than 900,000 Rwandans, mostly Tutsi, were killed. The scale of the killings and the large number of people implicated in the massacres posed a challenge the humane detention and prosecution of the more than 100,000 accused of genocide and crimes against humanity. The Gacaca court system, influenced by the traditional, communal law enforcement techniques, evolved as a solution. The system, put in place in 2001, involves both victims and witnesses in interactive hearings for alleged criminals. The judges are untrained citizens, elected by their peers. Although controversial on a number of grounds - including on the potential for gender bias and consistency with international standards for the administration of justice - the procedure is expected to promote community

healing by making the punishment of perpetrators faster, as well as being less expensive to the state.⁸⁷

Demobilization, Decommissioning and Reintegration

Protracted armed conflict tends to militarize significant sections of the affected population. Societies are often saturated with military weapons, as well as with soldiers - sometimes including large numbers of children - whose lives have been shaped by the experience of fighting. Consequently, there are two inter-related challenges in dealing with security issues at the end of a war. The first is to enable the demilitarization of society and, most specifically, address the challenge of demobilizing, decommissioning and reintegrating combatants (a process often referred to by the acronym 'DDR'). The second is to increase the security of the population. Ex-combatants not properly demobilized form a pool of potentially dangerous people who may be recruited by criminals and / or unscrupulous political forces for their own endeavors. The arms and ammunition remaining at the end of armed conflict may be redeployed by opportunists' intent on securing their own gains. Even if the former combatants want to return to peaceful civilian lives, they can often find they do not have the means and skills to support themselves (especially if much of their young lives have been spent in fighting), are often traumatized by their experiences in war. Furthermore, they may be rejected by their home community, especially if they were associated with troops engaged in war crimes. They therefore have very little resources for shifting into a new way of life. Thus a well-resourced and planned DDR process is crucial for the long term future and stability of the society. Faltas and Paes observe that:

"If disarmament is mostly a military function, demobilization is in essence a civilian operation and needs to be carefully attuned to subsequent reintegration. All too often, the people in charge of demobilization promise the ex-combatants benefits that the reintegration program is unable to provide. ... [Reintegration] can easily take up to ten years. Its

⁸⁶ See Coalition For The International Criminal Court, <http://iccnw.org>
⁸⁷ *People Building Peace*, op.cit. pp466-471

A GPPAC Approach to Dealing with the Past⁸⁸

Dealing with the past in war-torn, post-conflict, transition countries is a crucial pre-requisite to achieving sustainable peace and a secure future. Fundamental to this endeavor is to recognize and understand the significance of facing up to the harsh realities of a painful past. In order to enable comprehensive integration, such modalities as are introduced must be fully supported by governments, and fully supportive of all citizens of all ages, in particular victims of mass atrocities and all other human rights violations.

We value social reconciliation and the rebuilding of relationships as part of our conflict prevention and peacebuilding work, while recognizing the right of every person to choose when and if she/he will forgive and reconcile.

Based on this need, we should establish multidimensional systems

for reconciliation and trust-building by various actors. CSOs play a crucial role in reconciliation processes on local and regional levels. IGOs should support legitimate local actors to engage in reconciliation dialogue in good faith and offer appropriate, sustained protection and support, including capacity development, including to governmental, civic and media actors.

Historical experiences of violent conflict - particularly when widespread atrocities occurred - can leave legacies that continue to poison contemporary relations and increase the risk of renewed conflict. To promote historical reconciliation and justice:

1. The successor governments of states involved in these conflicts should properly recognize responsibility for past acts and demonstrate remorse for them by making formal apologies and, as

appropriate, symbolic and / or material reparations.

2. Support initiatives to transmit facts and memories to future generations in order to prevent a repeat of past crimes. These can include memorials, peace museums, and commemorative events.
3. Joint Commissions of Historians to research the past and develop a common framework of factually-based accounts of disputed histories and contentious issues so as to provide balanced information and analysis for educational material and public debates.
4. Develop education curricula and textbooks that are sensitive to these histories and are based on well-informed and balanced information. Where appropriate, collaborate on the development of common regional textbooks and materials.
5. Ensure the participation of young people in the peace and reconciliation process.

length is directly related to the duration and scope of the conflict: the longer the fighting took, the more difficult it will be for combatants to return to civilian life as a result of severed social ties and traumatization. ... Unfortunately, the challenges of this second phase are often underestimated by program planners and inadequately funded.”⁸⁹

of community members from which the fighting forces are drawn. Local civil society actors can serve as a kind of lightning rod to elicit and implement appropriate and sustainable strategies.

A significant factor in the success or failure of DDR processes is the degree to which they are inspired by and respond to the ideas and needs of those involved. Prospects of success are enhanced if weapons collection programs are seen as promoting the interests and needs

⁸⁸ GPPAC Preparatory document synthesising the Regional Action Agendas for preparing the Global Action Agenda.

⁸⁹ Sami Faltas and Wolf-Christian Paes. 2005. “Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration: Not Only a Job for Soldiers” in van Tongeren, et al., *People Building Peace II*, op.cit., p610

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Community-driven disarmament and symbolic reconciliation in Mali⁹⁰

The inter-community meetings that helped to bring peace to the war-torn northern region of Mali (see case study, above) also addressed the challenge of disarmament and collected weapons on a large scale. Initially, many northerners insisted that they had bought the weapons during a time when the state could not guarantee security and they wanted to be refunded for their purchases. Yet through these meetings, they agreed that payment for weapons exchange would be directed to their community for financing development activities, instead of personal payments. This formula resulted in probably the first ‘development for weapons’ initiative and proved largely successful. It is notable that the formula was developed through the process of discussion within communities, rather than being an externally conceived and driven program. Nevertheless, international support and funding was critical for its success. Eventually, the UN-supervised disarmament program collected close to 3,000 arms from demobilized combatants.

As the process gathered momentum, President Konaré recognized the need to consolidate the transition politically through a powerful symbolic event to mark national reconciliation. It was decided to hold a ceremony in Timbuktu, where almost 10,000 spectators gathered to watch these weapons burn in a giant bonfire, the Flamme de la Paix (‘Flame of Peace’). At the ceremony, the president received the announcement of the dissolution of the five armed movements, thus marking the decisive end to the war. Although the challenges of building a just and lasting peace continued, it was a powerful moment in shaping the historic memory of modern Mali. As such, it illustrates how the process of addressing the weapons question can be an integral component of consolidating a peace process.

Just as the ceremonial burning of arms marked the end to war and the commitment to national reconciliation in Mali, the DDR process in Mozambique also combined efforts to meet the practical needs of people with the less tangible symbolic realm of artistic encounter.

Transforming Arms into Ploughshares: combining the artistic & the pragmatic in Mozambique⁹¹

Following on from the signing of the peace agreement in 1995, the Christian Council of Mozambique initiated the Transforming Arms into Ploughshares project. Within an overall goal of promoting a ‘culture of peace’ in the war-devastated country, they recognized the value of tackling weapons proliferation as key to supporting a peaceful postwar transition. Their specific objectives were to collect and destroy all weapons in circulation by transform them into ‘ploughshares’. To achieve these ambitious goals they devised a series of incentives and tapped into the desire of people to disarm the society. In exchange for weapons they offered tools that could be used for income generation. Implements like hoes, building materials, sewing machines, bicycles for taking produce to market, wheelchairs and other items could make a crucial difference to support individual, family and community livelihoods. Upon collection, the weapons were immediately destroyed or made unusable. Yet there was a feeling that more needed to be done to mark the significance of the process and of the scraps of metal that remained. In some cases, weapons were destroyed in small public ceremonies at collection points in communities across the country. Innovatively, the TAE organizers asked local artists to make pieces of art, public monuments or practical objects from the scrap. This had a strong resonance with many Mozambicans, who saw them as representing the end of the war and a reminder of the need to build peace out of the experience of war.

Shifting values and cultures: educating for peace

“Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed” - UNESCO Charter

Efforts to generate a sustainable culture of peace must be rooted deeply in the population. A holistic and

⁹⁰ Based on Kåre Lode, op.cit.

⁹¹ Albino Forquilha. 2005. “Transforming Arms into Ploughshares: The Christian Council of Mozambique” in van Tongeren, et al., *People Building Peace II*, op.cit.

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pluralistic approach is required. In addition to addressing the economic and institutional structures that generate conflict and policy responses to change them, there is a need to transform the deeply embedded attitudes and patterns of relationships between groups of people that give rise to violence. Countless CSOs throughout the world, 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; gender equality; fulfillment of human rights; promoting equitable and sustainable development, as well as human and environmental security.

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 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 challenge racism, xenophobia and discrimination and promote tolerance and a culture of peace. Person-focused methodologies, such as prejudice reduction workshops and inter-faith dialogue, can complement efforts to address discrimination through policy reform and structural change. Often these initiatives are focused on youth, who may have greater capacities for change than older generations. Summer camps, integrated schools, and exchange programs can all promote what has become known as ‘next generation work’.

Transforming stereotypes & promoting tolerance: Nashe Maalo children’s television in Macedonia⁹²

Macedonia is comprised of an ethnic Macedonian majority, a sizable ethnic Albanian minority and smaller percentages of ethnic Turks, Roma, Serbs, Vlach and others. They tend to lead lives separated by

language, residence, and education and interact only on a superficial level. With so little contact across the ethnic divides, children’s perceptions of their own country and its peoples were based on stereotypes, misinformation or simple ignorance. Since the dissolution of Yugoslavia, tensions between ethnic groups have escalated, fueled by war in neighboring Kosovo in 1999 and peaking in 2001 with inter-communal fighting in Macedonia that ended through peace talks but reinforced a profound sense of insecurity and distrust.

In this climate, Search for Common Ground Macedonia (SCGM) aimed to help break the cycle of mistrust through media and education projects. One of the most notable projects has been a children’s television show, *Nashe Maalo* (“Our Neighborhood”), that became one of the most widely watched programs in the country. Developed for kids aged 8-12, the goal was for its young audience to better understand the country’s diversity and to foster positive attitudes that could potentially lead to more cooperative inter-ethnic relations. The show features five children of Albanian, Macedonian, Roma and Turkish backgrounds who live in an imaginary apartment building. They share a secret that binds them together: the building they live in is alive and her name is Karmen. In addition to being the kids’ confidante and friend, Karmen possesses the power to magically transport them into their neighbors’ cultural and psychological environment, thus opening the children to other people’s ways of thinking and living.

Co-produced by Search for Common Ground in association with the makers of the US series, *Sesame Street*, *Nashe Maalo* was created by experts in children’s television production and by research and content specialists with extensive experience in the Balkan region. They aimed to create ‘intended-outcomes’ television: to affect positive change in the knowledge, attitudes and behavior of children regarding Macedonia as a multi-ethnic society and their lives in their society. To do this, they needed to

⁹² Based on Eran Fraenkel. 2005. “Changing Attitudes Through Children’s Television: *Nashe Maalo* in Macedonia” in van Tongeren, et al., *People Building Peace II*, op.cit.

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balance clearly researched curricular goals focused on key challenges in social relations with the elements that make a children's TV series successful: that it grabs kids' imaginations and makes the kids want to see more.

Continual research was required to ensure that the program was achieving its 'intended-outcomes'. To examine the impact of the series over the course of several months, researchers interviewed 240 children at eight schools in the Skopje region - sixty 10-year-olds from each of the four ethnic groups - before and after viewing videotaped versions of the series. This study began before the TV series went on the air. Prior to viewing, many children demonstrated negative, stereotyped perceptions of members of ethnic groups other than their own. After viewing, more children showed positive perceptions and there was a significant increase among ethnic Macedonian children who said they would be willing to invite a child from the ethnic Albanian, Roma, and Turkish groups to their home. Another finding was that after viewing, recognition of minority languages had improved across all ethnic groups, and most dramatically among ethnic Macedonian children (the ethnic majority group).

An independent audience survey in conducted between the second and third season found that an average of 76 percent of children of all ethnicities watched *Nashe Maalo* regularly. Although intended for 8-12 year olds, it had become a 'family show'. The audience in fact ranged in age from five to seventeen and nearly half of the children's parents also watched the program. In the fifth and final season in 2004, these figures had increased to approximately 95 percent of children and 75 percent of their parents and most had watched regularly for at least three years. This meant that the program had reached 'saturation' of the population. It had served as a catalyst for conversation around topics that might not otherwise had been discussed and for presenting insights into how others lived in their shared country.

Education for peace was identified as a key priority for through the GPPAC process, in which it was observed that people of all ages have to be empowered to become

agents of change to address conflicts from the grassroots upwards. As their knowledge about prevention of violence and of conflict transformation grows, it should become entrenched in the mainstream consciousness. One of the means of doing this is through changing norms and supporting constructive responses to conflict by systematizing peace and conflict resolution education.

Educating 'agents for change': City Montessori School in Lucknow, India⁹³

Founded in 1959, the City Montessori School in Lucknow India has worked to implement its core principles of shaping future generations of 'world citizens'. Its educational philosophy is that true education releases capacities, develops analytical abilities, self-confidence, will power and goal-setting competencies and instills the vision that enables one to become a self-motivated agent of social change serving the interests of the community. The school has always seen itself as interconnected with the wider community and the wider world. A core belief is that "a school must act as a lighthouse to society; providing direction, guidance and leadership to students, parents, and society and also concern itself with the affairs of the age."

These ideals were put to the test in 1992, when inter-communal violence that claimed thousands of lives throughout large parts of India, sparked by the destruction of a mosque by Hindu nationalist extremists in nearby Ayodhya. With about 40 percent of its population Muslim, Lucknow braced itself for violence. In response the students of City Montessori took action to prevent further violence. They rode through the streets playing unity songs and leading a procession of thousands of children and their parents carrying banners with such slogans as 'We should live in unity'; 'The name of God is both Muslim and Hindu'; 'God is one, mankind is one'. Encouraged by the state governor, the school provided a meeting place for the heads of all the city's religions. They

⁹³ Based on Priti Barman. 2005. "Committed to Building Peace: City Montessori School in India" in van Tongeren, et al., *People Building Peace II*, op.cit.

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organized daily meetings where the leaders could pray together for mutual harmony and discuss strategies for keeping the peace. Each evening, these leaders returned to their communities to maintain calm. While violence flared nearby, Lucknow remained relatively calm.

One of the reasons why Lucknow may have remained calm and the population receptive to their actions is the legacy of 40-plus years of active engagement in the community. During this time, more than 250,000 children have been students in the school, the vast majority from Lucknow. They and their families (who are actively encouraged to be engaged in the school's programs) are likely to have been influenced by the core peace messages inculcated by the school.

The Lucknow City Montessori School provides a dramatic example of how schools can engage with the challenge of preventing large-scale socio-political violence. There are countless initiatives around the world to strengthen local capacities to mediate conflict and manage differences through conflict resolution training, mediation services, and dialogue facilitation. In the state of Ohio USA, for example, schools have become the focus for creative approaches for addressing conflict. While supported through programmatic activities like peer-mediation and anti-bullying initiatives, they have also sought to promote a change in the school culture. Tricia Jones discusses how schools have been able to develop a positive and nurturing community. *“First the students needed to understand their own dynamics of disrespect and agree to disallow that behavior... When individual students refuse to treat others with respect, it is the responsibility of other members of that community to stand up for them.”*⁹⁴ She argues that to truly transform violent responses to conflict, it is necessary to foster social and emotional learning. *“When children develop emotional competence, it is integrally intertwined with the development of conflict competence and social*

*competence. If we want our children to be able to manage conflict effectively, we need to appreciate that conflict is an inherently emotional experience. An emotionally traumatized student cannot be an effective manager of their own conflict and cannot reasonably help others manage their conflicts.”*⁹⁵

A nurturing educational environment can therefore address the more profound needs of how an individual learns to respond to their own feelings and to others around them. This supports the development of constructive approaches to managing difference. While education may not be sufficient for addressing the many structural factors that give rise to protracted armed conflict, it is potentially a critical path toward cultivating alternatives to violence. This is a goal where cooperation between civil society - often the source of peace education initiatives - and state educational can be fruitful.

As has been demonstrated throughout this chapter, civil society initiatives are often the source for innovative responses to conflict. While civil society as a whole is not necessarily a force for peace, the debates and initiatives cultivated within this sphere are often the motor for it. Their contribution to the underlying transformation of conflict and building peace extends from efforts to support individual development and cultivate positive norms in communities to tackling exclusionary policies, systems and structures that give rise to grievances. Ultimately, a widespread, inclusive and vibrant engagement within civic life can be the incubator for the institutions and habits needed to resolve conflict peacefully and generate more responsive and better governance needed to make peace sustainable.

⁹⁴ Tricia S. Jones. 2005. “Education That Makes a Difference” in van Tongeren, et al., *People Building Peace II*, op.cit., p.248.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p.249

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An overarching goal for strengthening the prospects for prevention and sustainable peacebuilding is to develop the resource base to underpin the capacity for timely, sustained and effective responses to conflict. This requires strengthening the human and institutional capacities of peacebuilding organisations and increasing the funding base for prevention and peacebuilding initiatives. Ultimately, these are all likely to be more successful if the geo-political context is conducive for greater human security and equitable development. Nevertheless, there is always likely to be a role for people and institutions skilled in working with conflict and mediating differences.

The previous chapter concentrated on exploring the many invaluable contributions that civil society can make to transforming conflict. Nevertheless, there are limits to what they can achieve. CSOs may be a necessary but incomplete resource for working with conflict. Other actors may be decisive. Foreign governments and inter-governmental organizations tend to have greater resources at their disposal - including the power of coercion - and often have institutional credibility and capacities to direct towards conflict situations. Ultimately it is necessary for the belligerent parties in the conflict, typically governments and armed groups, to decide whether and when to fight and under what conditions they will stop. Yet CSOs have the potential to engage with and complement the efforts of these other actors. Their effectiveness is partially proportionate to the knowledge, skills and other capacities they bring to their initiatives and it is possible that all of these can be enhanced.

This final chapter explores some of the myriad challenges and dilemmas encountered in civil society-based peacebuilding, with the aim of directing awareness to address them.

Strategic effectiveness: challenges for achieving sustainable peace

Peacebuilding, power and politics

As has been discussed throughout, peacebuilding is integrally entwined with social change. As such, it is

inherently political in the sense that it addresses social relations involving authority or power. Yet civil society peacebuilders are sometimes unclear about the political implications of their work. Within the processes of peacebuilding, however, power dynamics and their political implications operate at a number of levels.

- Key concepts and ideals - such as conflict, peace, democracy, justice, and participation - are inherently contested and are open to multiple interpretations. Furthermore, these terms are an essential part of political discourse and are commonly used to promote and justify action. 'Peace' for one could be experienced as 'pacification' to another. The 'pursuit of justice' for one can be experienced as 'war' to another. All those engaged with peacebuilding work need to grapple with these contradictions, as they have direct implications not only for the ultimate goals of what they are trying to achieve but also influence the development of strategy and ongoing practice in both subtle and dramatic ways.
- Those who identify primarily with conflict resolution approaches (in contrast to more explicit social change activist or human rights-based approaches) tend to see themselves - and usually wish to be seen - as 'impartial', in that they do not aim to promote the interests of one group over those of others and are unbiased on the contested issues⁹⁶. This quality is often welcomed by the parties to a conflict and can help to provide a space in which they can address their differences. Yet an impartial approach can

⁹⁶ Many (though certainly not all) conflict resolution practitioners have their roots in approaches that are influenced by the 'neutral mediator' tradition. They tend to perceive themselves as process advocates who do not have a stake in the outcome of the process. While they can be the representatives of a government or organization that has an interest in the peaceful settlement of the conflict, the practitioner usually derives authority primarily from the legitimacy he or she and the process holds in the perspective of the opposing parties. Therefore strategies are not based on the capacity to exert coercive power over recalcitrant parties but instead are built on trust and the power of dialogue and persuasion. *Impartiality* is usually understood as maintaining a non-biased stance with all parties to the conflict (like 'non-partisan') and not promoting in any particular outcome. Yet some recognize the need to support low-power groups in conflict situations so as to increase the likelihood of their achieving a more 'just' outcome. *Activism* is usually the effort to achieve a particular outcome (or type of outcome) and is often associated with strengthening the non-establishment party to address power asymmetries.

Power asymmetries and dialogue processes

Jonathan Kuttab, a prominent Palestinian human rights lawyer, in dialogue with Edy Kauffman, an Israeli peacebuilder, enumerates some of the potential risks of engaging in dialogue processes. These include:⁹⁷

- A false sense of symmetry between the ‘oppressor’ and the ‘oppressed’ when the actual relationship is not that of equals. These can be exacerbated in the dialogue process itself both through various technical obstacles to participation (such as restrictions on freedom of movement, adequacy of preparation, levels of professional expertise and language skills, and access to advice) and through expressions of power relations (the ability to exercise pressure, the language of diktats, and patronage).
- In the effort to reach agreement, a tendency to avoid the most serious and divisive issues or postponing them indefinitely.
- The tendency to accept the *status quo* and take for granted the present constellation of forces; focusing more on bringing an end to violence and less on justice and its structural causes.
- In the name of pragmatism, parties engaged in dialogue are often pressurized into compromising legitimate principles and abandoning positions generally held within their own community.
- When meetings include participants closely associated with state military or security forces, there is a fear that dialogue may be used as intelligence gathering. There is uncertainty as to when the motivation of the powerful is ‘know your enemy’ rather than ‘understand your neighbor’.
- Labeling those who participate in dialogue as ‘legitimate partners’ while de-legitimizing those who do not participate, especially when this is used to avoid negotiating with more representative but problematic opponents.
- The potential to make dialogue a substitute for action to correct injustices, especially when the organizers see dialogue as an end unto itself and are satisfied to repeat this inconclusive experience with other groups.

sometimes be implemented by treating all the parties as formally equal, even though there are extreme asymmetries in the actual relationship between the parties. In these cases, procedural equality does not necessarily lead to effective equality. Such initiatives may actually lead to a worsening in the conflict dynamics if the ‘weaker’ group feels that its needs cannot be secured through dialogue or if the ‘stronger’ group believes its hegemony has been reinforced by the process. To address this challenge, some peacebuilders position themselves as ‘multi-partial’: they actively work to promote the best interests of all those with whom they engage in ways that are consistent with human rights standards. This involves paying particular attention to ensuring that disadvantaged and marginalised groups are provided with support needed to promote their rights.

- In highly charged and fragile contexts, it is

insufficient at best and irresponsibly negligent at worst to try to ignore the political implications of projects. Although conflict involves a contest of interests between parties, many CSO initiatives (particularly those undertaken through grant funded projects) are depoliticized. They may cultivate interaction between those who hold moderate stances and an open mind. Yet in their efforts to restore peaceful interaction between people, they may fail to engage the hardliners, to address the interests that drive the conflict, or to acknowledge the very real dynamics that sustain conflicts as a tug-of-war for dominance over wealth and power political. While the initiative may ‘do no harm’, it may have little

⁹⁷ Edward (Edy) Kaufman. 2005. “Dialogue-based Processes: A Vehicle for Peacebuilding” in van Tongeren, et al., *People Building Peace II*, op.cit., pp474-475

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relevance. Conversely, a failure to fully consider the political implications of a project can sometimes allow it to be captured by those who see an opportunity to promote their own interests through it. Inadequate safeguards against abuse or insensitive implementation can result in the further deterioration of the conflict.

Many of these challenges can be addressed through a core awareness of power relations in the conflict situation, complemented by an ongoing strategic analysis of conflict interests and how proposed initiatives and practice interface with these dynamics.

Inattention to the power implications of an initiative is generally more common by external actors who are less acutely aware of the interplay of forces operating in a conflict situation. This may be particularly common among NGOs who are not rooted in an explicitly social change-oriented paradigm and who position themselves as implementing agencies. Reimann and Ropers differentiate between groups that are primarily movement-style and advocacy organizations and those that are primarily service providers. They suggest that the former “concentrate mainly on the input side of politics and try to influence political decision-making” whereas the latter “operate chiefly on the output side of politics...insofar as political authorities determine the conditions under which they work and decide on resource allocation.” As such, “there is a danger that their agenda is dominated by considerations within the realm of states, probably without a sufficient reflection of power political implications.”⁹⁸ This suggests the importance of NGOs being aware of the reasons why they are engaged and self-critical about the effects of their presence and actions on the conflict dynamics.

Inclusion and the challenge of equality of process and outcomes

Governmental and inter-governmental actors tend to work primarily in the realm of power politics and engage principally with the ‘power brokers’ amongst the conflict parties. While civil society peacebuilders can also engage with powerbrokers, they tend to have a special role in ensuring that a wider range of

stakeholders have an active role in peace initiatives, as illustrated in the previous chapters. The constructive involvement of these stakeholders can become crucial for changing the dynamics of the conflict, as these emerging ‘constituencies for peace’ can shift the powerbase within the conflicting parties and the terms on which they engage each other.

Therefore an important challenge addressed by civil society is to empower excluded stakeholder groups - often women, youth, and minority and indigenous peoples - so that the outcomes of peace process will result in changes that address their needs and promote their rights. At the same time, the engagement of otherwise marginalized groups can contribute substantively to the peace process and enhance its breadth and durability.

Empowerment can occur through the self-organization of members of these groups to take action in response to the situation. It can also be encouraged by including members of these groups in wider processes (e.g., mainstreaming) to ensure they are sufficiently inclusive of the pluralist nature of the conflict affected society. Each approach can encounter difficulties. In the first, the group may still find it struggles to have its voice heard - no matter how well they are organized - if the more powerfully entrenched groups are determined to ignore them.⁹⁹ In the second, marginalized groups may find themselves at a disadvantage in mainstream processes unless explicit measures are taken to ensure meaningful participation and members are able to skillfully seize opportunities that are presented.

Providing equal opportunities does not necessarily result in equal participation if the strategy treats everyone the same and does not proactively address the problems of marginalization experienced by some

⁹⁸ Cordula Reimann and Norbert Ropers. “Discourses on Peace Practices: Learning to change by Learning from Change?” in van Tongeren, et al., *People Building Peace II*, op.cit., pp34-35.

⁹⁹ It should be noted that such determined exclusion is very typically the cause of intractable conflict. It drives the excluded group to seek ever more extreme measures to try to get their voice heard. In this sense, the use of violence can be understood as a form of extreme communication when other forms fail to yield results.

sections of each community. For example, feminists and gender activists have long argued for the need to proactively use gender analysis in all aspects of program development, process design and evaluation.¹⁰⁰ Such an approach may also be crucial for promoting the effective inclusion of other groupings.

Attention is needed to ensure that the design and format of the process does not disadvantage certain participants, particularly those who have been excluded previously from political processes. Training and strategic advice can help, as can ensuring that the process structure does not mirror exclusionary social structures. It is sometimes valuable to create separate spaces, such as women's forums or youth groups, where relevant participants can articulate their distinctive perspectives and needs in order to develop strategies to promote them. Such caucuses are a strategy used in mainstream democratic practice to enable those with special interests / special needs to meet together to articulate platforms and agendas that address their own and their constituency's needs. This can support the development of a confident 'voice' necessary to be effective advocates. They may ultimately strengthen the capacity to contribute positively to conflict transformation as these social groups are able to participate more actively and effectively in the public life of the community.

It may be impossible to ever completely 'even the playing field', in part because parties to conflict are generally intensely aware of the balance of power between them and reluctant to cede any advantage that might jeopardize their core goals. Nevertheless when otherwise marginalized stakeholder groups are able to participate effectively, the prospects for a sustainable and just peace are often increased - as demonstrated in many of the case studies in the previous chapter. In essence, the struggle for effective participation of disadvantaged social groups is imperative on multiple grounds. It is their right (based in international human rights standards of equality and participation) and a necessity (because they may otherwise direct energies in destructive / unproductive directions) and a valuable resource for the peacebuilding effort.

Dilemmas of engaging with armed groups and proscribed organizations

As described in previous chapters, civil society-based actors have the potential to play a unique role in helping armed groups - or those close to them - find constructive ways of engaging in peace processes. In some situations, CSOs are more acceptable to armed and opposition groups than representatives of governments and IGOs, allowing them to play a distinct role. Yet engagement with armed groups presents a number of political, ethical and practical dilemmas. Although governments and some mainstream parties will often seek to block the participation of militants out of concern that it will give them legitimacy, it is difficult to decisively end a war without involving those who are waging it.

Conciliation Resources¹⁰¹ points out that condemning human rights abuses, taking action against perpetrators and exploring effective ways of ending the conflict are all essential responses to organized violence. Pursuit of one goal must not happen at the expense of another. The challenge for interveners is to manage the tensions between the twin pursuits of peace and justice through careful and strategic consideration of timing and roles, including taking into full consideration the views of affected communities to determine appropriate responses to human rights abuses. While engagement with an armed group is not the same as appeasement or complicity, there is a valid concern that engagement may confer legitimacy on an armed group's struggle or tactics. However, there are a range of available options

¹⁰⁰ The needs of men and women are not always the same, due to their different roles, responsibilities and resources. The impact of different interventions will also vary according to gender. Women and men are likely to differ also in their capacity, authority or availability to participate in specific activities and initiatives, so attention must be paid to overcoming such barriers. Sex disaggregated information provides quantitative data on gender differences and inequalities (e.g. differences between women and men in morbidity and mortality; in access to decision-making; or in voter registration), while gender analysis provides qualitative information. Patterns of gender difference and inequality may be revealed in sex disaggregated analysis; gender analysis is then the process of examining why the disparities are there, whether they are a matter for concern, and how they might be addressed.

¹⁰¹ Conciliation Resources. Accord Programme Policy Briefing. Online: <http://www.c-r.org/accord/engage/accord16/policypaper.shtml>

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for how to engage, including those based in low-key activities led by local community groups or NGOs. These may keep the option of dialogue alive without appearing to legitimize a group. As Conciliation Resources argues:

“Although the case for engagement with armed groups will always be context-specific and dynamic, the question is more usefully framed as who should engage and how, rather than whether to engage or not. The wide variety of possible engagement options means that engagement of some form, even if it is simple contact, is usually warranted. The challenge is to identify who is best placed to intervene and using what strategy. The different stakeholders in armed conflicts (including local communities, national governments, international organizations and foreign governments) will all have different thresholds at which engagement becomes appropriate or effective. They will also have different modalities of engagement at their disposal. Even during particularly ‘hot’ phases in a conflict informal intermediaries can maintain discreet contacts with elements of armed groups who are open to and serious about dialogue.”¹⁰²

Especially since the events of 11 September 2001 and the response by many state actors to declare a ‘war against terrorism’, it has become increasingly common for governments to put armed insurgency groups onto the ‘proscribed’ list of terrorist organizations. These include both long-standing armed movements with territorially- and politically- specific goals (such as the LTTE in Sri Lanka or the FARC in Colombia) and newer transnational groups such as those affiliated with the *Al Qaeda* network. Because the legislation adopted in many countries makes it illegal for anyone to have contact with these groups, it has become difficult even for well-known peacemaking organizations and individuals to explore the opportunities for a negotiated settlement or to provide the support that could be needed to foster a durable peacemaking process. They may risk being labeled as ‘pro-terrorist’ just by seeking to explore ways of addressing the conflict.

In a global context where the concepts of ‘terror’ and ‘terrorist’ are ill defined and highly contested, assigning the label to a group can have a range of political purposes. While the ‘international community’ has generally ruled out the concept of ‘state terrorism’, in part because the use of violence by states is regulated in international law¹⁰³, many people around the world perceive double standards.

Becoming listed as a proscribed terrorist group can have paradoxical consequences. In some cases, it has strengthened the hand of the ‘hardliners’ within an armed group. They argue that a continued military strategy is the only legitimate and viable response to their exclusion. There are also a number of cases where it has impeded the progress of ongoing peace talks. For example, in 2003 the LTTE was prevented from attending a donor conference held in Washington to discuss development aid and reconstruction due to US domestic legislation. This was a significant contribution to the negative dynamics that led to the deadlock of a previously dynamic peacemaking process.¹⁰⁴

Furthermore, the decision to label a group as a terrorist organization can have considerable implications for how they will be treated and perceived. George Wachira points some of the ironies that may result:

“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 ongoing attempts to resolve the conflict in northern Uganda through dialogue, following the failure of military solutions for the last

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ See, for example, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Report of the Secretary-General *In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All*. A/59/2005. March 2005.

¹⁰⁴ Liz Philipson “Engaging armed groups: The challenge of asymmetries” in Robert Ricigliano, Ed. *Choosing to engage: Armed groups and peace processes*. Accord: an international review of peace processes. Issue 16. London: Conciliation Resources. <http://www.c-r.org/accord/engage/accord16/16.shtml>

eighteen years. Second, 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 organizations’. ... 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 against them”¹⁰⁵.

There may be very dramatic consequences for civil society organizations operating in contexts seen as pivotal in the ‘war against terrorism’. According to Bridget Walker, some donors who provide funds for work in the Middle East have changed the terms and conditions of their grants.¹⁰⁶ Funding support that previously had few strings attached now comes with explicit political conditions. One institutional donor includes, in an annex to the funding contract, a list of what it regards as terrorist organizations. They stipulate that grant recipient organizations, project beneficiaries and their families should not have links with these organizations. In addition, all those bodies receiving funds must receive clearance by the donor, a process which involves taking details not only of staff members but also their families. In this way, she concludes that official aid is becoming part of the armory of intelligence gathering.

It is understandable that governments, international organizations and other donors are concerned to prevent sources of support for individuals and groups engaged in terrorist activities. Yet, as Kevin Clements concludes: *“If civil society groups cannot communicate with warring parties, provide safe spaces for difficult discussion, and help individuals and groups frame and reframe their problems in creative ways, the international community loses enormously important insights into the ways in which the needs and interests of terrorists or potential terrorists might be satisfied nonviolently.”*¹⁰⁷

Scale and linking dynamics: challenge of countering forces of destruction

One of the greatest challenges is to generate sufficient momentum behind essentially constructive peace and

justice initiatives to counter the sheer scale of the forces of oppression and destruction that characterize conflict situations. This is a challenge of both scale (the size and locus of the initiative) and of supporting strategic linkages with the range of other initiatives. It is important to bear in mind the cumulative effects of multiple initiatives over time in bringing about long-term change as was explored in Chapter —. Yet individual CSO initiatives are too often too small and too isolated to make the kind of difference that is needed in these urgent life-or-death conditions.

Governmental and intergovernmental agencies also encounter this challenge. For example, the influential Joint Utstein Study of Peacebuilding¹⁰⁸ reviewed the peacebuilding activities of four major donor governments and found a ‘strategic deficit’ resulting from the lack of strategic connections (i.e. *projects and programs* are not sufficiently connected to, derived from, or integrated in wider peacebuilding *policies*). This can sometimes result in a lack of connection between what are often micro-level peacebuilding activities and the macro-political processes.

The challenge of developing more coherent macro strategies within the international community - and the roles that can be played by CSOs in contributing to these strategies - is beyond the scope of this paper. Yet there is much that can be done by CSOs to strengthen the effectiveness of their efforts. The significance of people from conflict-affected societies engaging in the process of developing a vision for their shared future may be part of the answer: somewhat like creating the basis for a ‘blue print’ for the house they intend to inhabit. Yet there is also much to be done to strengthen

105 George Wachira “An East African Perspective” in van Tongeren, et al., *People Building Peace II*, op.cit., p79.

106 Bridget Walker, op.cit.

107 Kevin Clements “The War on Terror: Effects on Civil Society Actors in the Field of Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding” in van Tongeren, et al., *People Building Peace II*, op.cit., p.78

108 Dan Smith. 2004. *Towards a Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding: Getting Their Act Together*. Overview report of the Joint Utstein Study of Peacebuilding. Oslo: PRIO - International Peace Research Institute. Available on: http://www.prio.no/files/file44563_rapport_1.04_webutgave.pdf

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the linkages between their initiatives. It is especially challenging to generate effective working linkages both vertically and horizontally between those operating at different levels of the conflict system, which typically has community, national, regional and international dimensions.

A gap in many conflict situations is the weak link between community-level groups, structures and processes with mechanisms and strategies deployed by national, regional and global institutions, whether official or civil society institutions. In general, it seems that larger institutions are better placed to address systemic factors and root causes of conflict. Community-based groups are better placed to address specific dynamics of conflict on the ground - as illustrated in the section on community-level peacemaking. Both are needed for comprehensive prevention and peacebuilding. Engagement amongst peacebuilders operating across the range of levels may help to ensure that positive outcomes developed at one level are not undermined at another level.

Yet the inter-linkages between these levels are complex. There are numerous practical and organizational challenges to forging and sustaining these linkages. Greater attention is needed to create the logistical, technological and human resource systems to enable different actors to rapidly mobilize an effective response and deploy a coherent approach. There are also substantial dilemmas connected to the terms and conditions under which these linkages are cultivated, particularly if the community-based levels are not to operate simply as 'implementing partners' but are to have genuine ownership of strategies and methods. The inter-play between actors operating at different levels will inevitably be challenging, given that they are likely to have different frames of reference, needs and priorities, and resources and capacities. Yet the scope of change that can be enabled by such interaction is likely to make multi-level work worthwhile if it is undertaken in a respectful and strategic manner.

There are examples of coherent, multi-level organizational systems put in place to respond to

specific conflict situations, such as the National Peace Accord structures in South Africa described above. This reveals the potential for designing an intentional infrastructure for sustaining peace nationally, where the political will exists.¹⁰⁹ Yet the local and national peacebuilding architecture is seldom connected with wider structures at the regional and international levels.

One option may be through networks operating at different levels for facilitating engagement, particularly where they serve as 'boundary partners' that bridge multiple levels. Andrés Serbin explains some of the advantages of regional CSO networks engaging local grassroots community-based organizations: "*These local organizations have solid knowledge of the 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 initiatives.*"¹¹⁰ Networks are generally a fairly open and fluid arrangement, entailing numerous challenges to ensure that they operate effectively and reliably - as discussed further below. Yet given the intrinsically autonomous aspirations of most CSOs, they may offer the best format for supporting the development of strategic linkages and helping to increase the overall scale of peacebuilding work.

'Project-itis': the challenge of complacency?

Many civil society-based peacebuilding initiatives emerge as a spontaneous response of people affected by the conflict to address the turmoil around them. They may also spring from the urge of concerned people elsewhere to provide solidarity to those suffering from armed conflict. Such initiatives are generally

¹⁰⁹ It is important to note that this integrated system of national, regional and local level structures was created through a negotiated agreement between all the main political parties in South Africa (in a process organised and mediated by civil society groups), as they recognized that the continued escalation of violence jeopardized the political negotiations. This suggests the potential value of reaching similar sorts of agreements to create practical peacebuilding structures early on in a peace process.

¹¹⁰ Serbin, op.cit. p52.

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characterized by a quality of urgency combined with the ability to mobilize whatever limited resources are available to do whatever can be done to make a difference in the situation.

These spontaneous efforts can be complemented and sustained by more professional, planned and funded NGO-organized projects and programs. Over the past fifteen years, a professional NGO sector working on peace and conflict issues has grown with the support of donors willing to provide funds for peacebuilding. These resources have greatly strengthened the breadth and depth of peacebuilding and the development of the field. A set of issues around financial resources will be explored in greater detail in the next section.

One of the paradoxical outcomes of more funding has been a shift in some of the working modalities of peacebuilding NGOs. In particular, the funding application process has created an incentive for NGOs to frame their initiatives as ‘projects’ that can be codified in advance (often a considerable amount of time in advance, to meet the requirements of donor funding cycles) with the aim of producing measurable outputs from the resources granted. The donor’s need for such frameworks is understandable procedurally and the requirements can assist in the planning and monitoring process. Yet the formalization of ‘projects’ can inadvertently create a shift in the *modus operandi* of peacebuilding work. A focus on developing fundable projects can sometimes result in a disconnect between the peacebuilding initiative and conflict context.

- Groups sometimes have opportunistic motives for setting up peacebuilding initiatives when they are seen as a way to secure funding. Particularly when there is a sudden influx of funds allocated for peacebuilding in a specific conflict, numerous organizations may develop projects to obtain those funds - regardless of the need for the activity or the capacity of the organization to conduct it meaningfully. Sometimes cynically referred to as ‘grant eaters’, such organizations may be motivated more to secure their own livelihood than to use their skill and courage to promote peace and greater justice.
 - NGOs sometimes slip into the de-energizing dynamics of what can be called a ‘project mentality’. Implementing the set of activities takes on its own rationale that is sometimes fulfilled regardless of the changing circumstances and opportunities. More worryingly, people can lose focus on ‘big picture’ strategic thinking as they start to routinely plan for the next round of project activities or even the next project after the funding for the current one is completed. Routine project implementation tasks may absorb all the energy of those involved and divert resources and momentum away from potentially more strategic processes. The initiative may begin to lose dynamism and relevance, as those involved become accustomed to doing things for doing things’ sake so as to fulfill pre-formulated project plans.
 - Sometimes organisations implement projects simply because they are possible or because ‘we are organization X and this is what we do...’ irregardless of whether it is among the most needed activities in that situation. As a result, the project inadequately addresses the issues at the heart of the conflict. For example, an organization that customarily facilitates dialogue may set up a dialogue project, inviting those who are willing to talk with each other to participate. They may place little emphasis on trying to ensure that the process is geared toward achieving some kind of outcome in the conflict dynamic. Dialogue processes have the potential to facilitate interaction between all stakeholders, allowing them to find ways to address controversial, conflictual issues and relationships. Yet dialogue is not an end in itself. At its most banal, dialogue produces merely an interesting but unfocused, self-perpetuating, circular conversation. This risk may be magnified when ‘difficult’ stakeholders are excluded and / or the ‘difficult’ issues are avoided. It can also occur when little attention is given to how the participants can use the experience to support sustained change. While such dialogue may do no (or little) harm, neither does it do much good.
- Ultimately, these different forms of ‘project-itis’ create a complacency within the conflict system that does more to entrench it than to transform it, whether due to

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Aiming for outcomes: criteria of effectiveness for peace practice

Through a major collaborative learning initiative, the Reflecting on Peace Practice Project, Mary Anderson and Lara Olson¹¹¹ identified a number of overarching 'criteria of effectiveness' that can be used to assess initiatives:

1. The effort causes participants and communities to develop their own initiatives for peace.
2. The effort results in the creation or reform of political institutions to handle grievances that fuel conflict.
3. The effort prompts people increasingly to resist violence and provocations to violence.
4. The effort results in an increase in people's security.

They suggest that the significance

of these efforts can be further judged by: (a) the urgency of change, i.e. that it comes sooner rather than later; (b) whether it is sustained change that is able to last over time; and (c) the proportionality of change, in that it matches the scale of violence.

cynical motives or from well-meaning but ill-advised efforts. It may be possible to avoid supporting this tendency through a sharper focus on the purpose of initiatives and the methods used to achieve them. At one level, this may involve greater focus on developing and articulating the larger vision for peace, as discussed in the previous chapter. Having a blueprint of a desirable future provides a basis for determining the strategic priorities and overall purpose of the work. Another is to be more explicit in designing and implementing initiatives that will make a meaningful difference in the conflict dynamic (see box for one set of criteria of effectiveness). Both approaches may help to bring a greater sense of purposefulness into peacebuilding work that can counter the risk of complacency.

Need for a holistic approach

The issues addressed in the previous sections point to the need to take a more strategic and holistic approach to peacebuilding. While it is impossible for every initiative to address all aspects of the challenge, it is crucial that peacebuilders ground their work in a sense of how their efforts can directly contribute to cultivating the wider changes they seek and how their efforts complement those in the wider system. At the same time, they need to be savvy about the power politics involved while helping to ensure that their efforts work towards more inclusive and egalitarian future and do not reinforce exclusionary dynamics and systems.

Strategically, greater emphasis is needed on what Barnett Rubin terms systemic prevention.¹¹² Yet this needs to be artfully combined with approaches that address specific national dynamics along with community-based conditions. Both globally and locally, however, there is a tendency to target a few elements of the problems as though they can be isolated from the wider system.

While it may not be possible to act on all issues simultaneously or with equal emphasis, an acute awareness of the interdependency of a range of

111 Mary Anderson and Lara Olson. 2003. *Confronting War: Critical Lessons for Peace Practitioners*. Collaborative for Development Action, Inc. Available on:

http://www.cdainc.com/rpp/archives/2003/01/confronting_war.php

112 Systemic prevention consists of measures to lessen the global prevalence of violent conflict through measures not targeted at specific states and can include: decreasing illicit access to capacities for violent conflict by regulation of markets in conflict goods such as diamonds, small arms; changing international legal regimes for prohibited goods such as narcotics so as to deprive them of their risk premium; creating incentives for peaceful behavior (such as access to aid or membership in the EU); blocking activities that create situations prone to conflict (through anti-corruption measures or norms and sanctions against purchase of war booty futures contracts or use of public funds for ransom); cushioning countries from the effects of commodity price shocks; imposing sanctions for prohibited behavior through the development of international legality, as through the International Criminal Court. Barnett Rubin. 2005. *Prevention of Violent Conflict: Tasks and Challenges for the UN*. GPPAC Discussion Paper. Available: http://www.gppac.org/documents/GPPAC/Research/UN-CS_interaction/UN_reader.pdf

important factors can help to prevent false dichotomies (i.e., x is not connected to y) and misleading hierarchies (i.e., x is more important than y). A more holistic analysis may provide greater insight leading to more effective strategies. It might also encourage partnerships between actors that are often seen as unconnected or antagonistic. For example, there is a need to better understand how systemic factors - such as global trade flows and the availability of small arms and light weapons - interact with and exacerbate the dynamics of specific conflict situations. Too often, there is a tendency to address them separately. Yet, as this example of the complex issues involved in working on small arms suggests, there is much to be gained by working explicitly on the interconnections.

Security, conflict & controlling small arms: insights from GPPAC conference

At the GPPAC Conference in July 2005, participants grappled with formulating a comprehensive response to the challenges presented by small arms and light weapons in conflict situations. They recognized that the flow, availability and misuse of these weapons can have a range of impacts in conflict contexts, including: empowering actors with access to weapons and disempowering those without; enabling spoilers; shifting existing structures, including state authority and the traditional conflict management structures; changing political and social dynamics; generating intense grievance; tempting greed; and complicating already complex conflicts. The availability and misuse of these weapons is not simply a symptom of violent conflict; they are a contributing factor in the development of conflict. Yet limiting supply is not enough; the problem of demand must also be addressed.

Communities can play a crucial role in escalating or reducing the demand-side of this problem. When security disintegrates, citizens seek mechanisms to protect themselves against various ‘predators’ from state, non-state and criminal forces that thrive when law and order collapses. When people feel the need to protect themselves, they often acquire a weapon. Yet communities could instead develop alternative methods for their collective security. This requires a

multi-dimensional strategy. Various components could include a focus on the attitudes of potential owners and on society as a whole about the desirability of guns; on providing security to communities so that the perceived need to provide for one’s own security is reduced or eliminated; and controlling access to weapons and forcing prices up beyond the reach of most people. Community-level initiatives can be effective in trying to alter views about a ‘gun culture’. Ensuring that women have an effective voice in organizing society can be crucial for setting priorities. After all, a secure society is not one where people feel ‘well-protected’ but where ‘you don’t need to lock your door.’

In war-torn societies, important elements in a comprehensive program may include focusing on healing psycho-social wounds, the re-integration of ex-combatants, more general societal reconciliation, training in conflict prevention, and a special focus on youth programs. Such programs need to focus on those ‘who have blood on their hands’ as well as victims. They need to promote the inter-linkages between peace, human rights, and reconciliation. The conference working group offered three general recommendations to GPPAC:

- The development of ‘guidance notes’ (do’s and don’ts) on how best to enable the conflict prevention community to integrate small arms issues into their work.
- The integration of small arms and light weapons issues into conflict analysis and assessment frameworks.
- Assisting civil society actors in incorporating small arms issues into their work with community, government and other actors.

A more holistic approach is important not just to respond to specific conflict situations but also towards supporting a wider systems change globally. A feature of civil society action over recent decades has been the mobilization around specific issues rather than wider social change ideologies that are manifested in comprehensive political agendas. While this approach has been successful in leading to specific policy changes, it has often been difficult to conclusively

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address the underlying premises of the wider system. As Nobel Peace Laureate Jody Williams notes: “CSOs must become much more actively involved in promoting a broad and cohesive human security framework. ... Every time we de-link those issues or fail to make the inevitable linkages crystal clear to the general public, we undercut our own efforts to promote a broader understanding and acceptance of a human security agenda.”¹¹³ This is clearly a great challenge, both conceptually and practically, yet one that may hold great potential for promoting systemic change.

Enhancing capacities: resources, skills, and ethics

A key quality found in many of the experiences documented above was the ability of peacebuilders to mobilize the creative capacities inherent within a given conflict system by leveraging the available social, material and cultural resources. Often these resources are integral to the identity of those who are instigating the peacebuilding initiative: religious leaders may draw on their moral and spiritual authority; women may identify across conflict divides through their shared experiences as women; respected elders may provide leadership to convene members of their community; youth may generate innovative responses by engaging their creative energy and enthusiasm.

Many civil society initiatives are founded in existing social structures or cultural traditions that provide their primary source of inspiration and legitimacy. For example, where there is a tradition of community decision-making, this may be activated to create a space for peacemaking. Where there is a tradition of mass movement politics, this can become the channel for mobilizing a peaceful yet powerful counter-response to dictatorship. In many places, religious leaders have been able to draw on their institutional resources and position to support processes leading towards peaceful social change.

The most important ingredient in civil society peacebuilding is the activation of those involved. Yet effective initiatives also typically require a range of situationally-appropriate technical, financial, logistical and human resources. It seems that the key to long-term

sustainability is to build on capacities that exist by leveraging the social and cultural resources inherent within a society to develop effective responses to conflict. They can be supported by providing appropriate inputs from external sources, such as security, financing, technical assistance and political support.

In many cases, civil society initiatives are assisted by professional peacebuilding NGOs based either in the society or international NGOs. They provide training, strategic advice, technical assistance / specialist skills and knowledge, solidarity and other support to local civil society actors committed to addressing conflicts in their midst.

Over the past fifteen years, there has been a dramatic growth in the number and quality of NGOs that explicitly focus on peacebuilding and working with conflict. With this ‘professionalization’ of the field, a number of new challenges have emerged. NGOs sometimes 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. A certain degree of learning from trial and error is inevitable. Yet NGOs have a duty of care to ensure their basic competence to ensure they ‘do no harm’ and have the commitment (and necessary resources) to see through what they start. This section explores issues related to professional ethics, the dynamics of funding relationships, and the knowledge and capacities of those undertaking peacebuilding.

Guiding principles and values

Sometimes the legitimacy of CSO peacebuilding initiatives is questioned, especially when it is unclear to whom they are accountable and what they are trying to

¹¹³ Quoted in GPPAC. 2005. “From Reaction to Prevention: Civil Society Forging Partnerships to Prevent Violent Conflict and Build Peace” Conference Report. European Centre for Conflict Prevention. Available on <http://www.global-conference.net/gppac.asp?action=rubriek&rubr=36>

achieve. Sometimes they are criticized for being insufficiently linked to real constituencies and responding to their concerns. In other times, suspicions are aroused by obscure or untransparent communication about what they are doing and why. Even though these suspicions may be more due to misunderstanding than malfeasance, it can undermine confidence and generate suspicion in fragile political environments.

GPPAC Working Group on Guidelines, Ethics and Accountability: Key Observations¹¹⁴

“As the peace community grows and matures, and the political context in which we operate changes, it is becoming increasingly important that the peacebuilding and conflict prevention community take time for self-reflection and set standards and principles to which the community as a whole can adhere. The working group participants agreed that there is both an internal and an external rationale for establishing guidelines.

Internally, there is a heightened awareness that CSOs are not immune to the divisions, tensions and conflicts in the societies in which they operate. Sometimes habits or unequal relationships are so ingrained that they are automatically maintained within CSOs. In such circumstances, civil society can exacerbate the problems in their communities, by failing to act impartially and instead campaigning for one or the other side of the divide.

In spite of this, civil society tends to take the moral higher ground, particularly vis á vis other actors, such as governments and private business. If it is to do so with credibility and integrity, however, civil society has to be very sure of the ground on which it stands. This does not mean that ... CSOs cannot take sides, or that there is a ‘right’ or a ‘wrong’ in every given situation. It does mean however, that civil society as a whole must adhere to principles that create space for diversity and dialogue, and mechanisms to address the diversity of its constituencies.

Furthermore, we need to establish how we see ourselves: are we mere global social workers, accepting the status quo and addressing problems as they arise and where we can, or do we seek to transform the underlying causes of those problems?

This raises the very question of how we understand social change as a process and how we propose to engage with it as a project. ...

The field of conflict prevention and peacebuilding should make use of the valuable lessons learned in older, more experienced civil movements, such as those for human and women’s rights. Particular areas of interest are ensuring participation and maintaining the dignity of our constituencies, reducing inequality step-by-step, taking a rights-based approach, and taking into account the interdependence of all our actions. We must remain aware of the linkages between the realm of state and government, and that of civil society. We work in a political sphere, yet must maintain a critical distance.”

Some peacebuilding NGOs have articulated guidelines for their own practice. For example, Search for Common Ground has a series of ‘core principles’ and uses them as the basis for articulating a series of ‘operating practices’: make long-term commitments; use an integrated approach; become engaged in order to see the possibilities; be social entrepreneurs; become immersed in local cultures; practice cooperative action.¹¹⁵ In a similar manner, International Alert has articulated seven criteria that should be met in international peacebuilding efforts, including its own.¹¹⁶

114 Conference Report, op.cit., p73.

115 Search for Common Ground website:
http://www.sfcg.org/sfcg/sfcg_core.html and
http://www.sfcg.org/sfcg/sfcg_operating.html

116 Peacebuilding should be: Tailored - to fit the needs of the situation, requiring a broad palette of adaptable methods rather than an off-the-shelf technique or standard template; Holistic - to address the full range of peace and conflict issues, the long-term causes as well as the immediate symptoms; Inclusive - to engage and benefit the whole of society, since limiting the engagement and benefits to only some sectors will entrench the conflict problems; Participatory - to involve people not merely as beneficiaries but as active participants; Respectful - of the qualities of leadership and courage required for peacebuilding and with willingness to learn from ordinary people’s knowledge and understanding of their own society; Sustained - so that the process of building peace is supported for as long as is necessary, rather than being subject to arbitrary political or bureaucratic timetables; Knowledge-based - because peacebuilding has much greater prospects of success if it is based on research and strengthened by continuing monitoring and assessment. In fulfilling these conditions, peacebuilding must also address the gender dimensions of conflict and peace. International Alert website, Online: http://www.international-alert.org/about_alert/code_of_conduct.php?page=about

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Yet in some parts of the world, there seems to be a need for a more fundamental public debate about what is civil society and the roles of CSOs in addressing public affairs - as is demonstrated in this example from West Africa.

Clarifying NGO Roles: A View from West Africa¹¹⁷

In West Africa, local community initiatives, popular movements and sustained civil society activities have been a highly visible and vital response to the violent conflicts that have convulsed much of the region in the past fifteen years. Many peace activists and other citizens long for strong and well-functioning state institutions that can guarantee their security; they want governments capable of promoting sustainable development and inclusive societies. Therefore many see their role as helping to create the pre-conditions for good governance and development.

Yet there is considerable confusion about the role of NGOs. Some governments see NGOs as competitors for resources, as well as competing for 'voice' and credibility within their own society and with international actors. Some appear to fear that NGOs become stronger at the expense of state institutions. Political parties can be similarly suspicious, sometimes accusing prominent NGO activists of doing public service work in order to gain a platform and reputation from which they can then run for political office. The wider public can also be confused and can question the motives of those involved, as well as wonder about the sources of their funding and whose interests are really being served by their activities.

Emmanuel Bombande, director of the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), believes that part of the problem is that there are no clearly defined boundaries around the roles and functions that NGOs play. In particular, there are few ways to clarify whether they have the hidden aim of pursuing power. Standards and mechanisms for ensuring transparency or promoting accountability of NGOs in West Africa (as in much of the rest of the world) are inadequate or non-existent. He suggests that there is a need for a code of conduct for CSOs working on conflict. Much as the Hippocratic Oath has shaped the development

of the medical profession, such a code could contribute to strengthening a number of different dimensions of the work.

- It would provide an ethical framework for practitioners. Through the process of mutually agreeing and engaging with a common set of normative values and standards, individuals and organizations can strengthen their own reflexive awareness of their conduct.
- It would be a tool to communicate clearly the roles and responsibilities of the CSO peacebuilders to the general public, governments, other CSOs and international organizations.
- It could potentially serve as the basis of a peer review mechanism. In recognition that, for the most part, no one has given a mandate to civil society peacebuilders, it is important to have high standards in such matters. These could include standards for the right conduct of leadership, responsible stewardship of financial resources and the quality of work as witnessed in the contribution it makes to constructive peacebuilding.

One of the important themes explored in the development of GPPAC's regional and global action agendas was the value of articulating and deliberating a core set of guiding principles for the peacebuilding field. (See box, below.) In a straw poll at the conclusion of the conference, there was overwhelming agreement on the need to develop a code of conduct for the field - possibly with regional variations. Yet participants also strongly resonated with awareness that the actual process of developing such codes would be crucially important for its legitimacy and for promoting its implementation.

Funding relationships

Many initiatives are supported by financing from either domestic sources or foreign donors. Yet there are numerous examples of times when local people voluntarily contribute their own funds or initiatives are designed in such a way that financial requirements are

¹¹⁷ Interview with author, 15 August 2004. See also Catherine Barnes. *UN-CSO Interaction in Conflict-Affected Communities*, op.cit.

Guiding principles and values: Global Action Agenda¹¹⁸

More than a thousand organizations and individuals actively involved in peacebuilding throughout the world participated in the development of GPPAC regional action agendas and the Global Action Agenda, in which a series of guiding principles were articulated, deliberated and eventually endorsed.

1. Achieving just peace by peaceful means. We are committed to preventing violent conflict to the fullest extent possible by all peaceful means. We need to continue to strengthen our proactive, nonviolent and cooperative methods of peaceful engagement in response to emerging tensions and crises. Prevention and peacebuilding initiatives should contribute to achieving justice in multiple dimensions, including restorative, distributive, gender, social and environmental justice. These values are at the heart of our ethical and political standards of action. We should continually engage in critical

examination of how our own policies, practices and programs contribute to fulfilling human rights and dignity.

2. Primacy of local participation and ownership. Sustainable peace can emerge when people affected by conflict feel that the peace process is their own and not externally imposed. We believe that strategies and initiatives to address conflict should generally be locally derived and internationally supported. Foreign governments, multilateral institutions and international NGOs can help by creating spaces, providing resources and supporting inclusive processes. They should build on capacities that exist, not duplicate or displace locally developed initiatives. To fully realize this goal, we need to address disparities in power and resources that affect our relationships and peacebuilding work.

3. Diversity, inclusiveness and

equality. We recognize the value inherent in diversity and pluralism and believe that differences can be a source of strength. We recognize that women's equality is a cornerstone for sustainable peace and justice. We work to create inclusive, diverse and vibrant civil societies- emphasizing the special needs and rights of vulnerable groups- through the promotion of respect and inclusiveness and by taking action to increase equality of opportunity and of resources. We aim for empowerment of all those who experience political, economic and social marginalization by supporting the development of capacities at the individual and organizational level, including through local and regional civic networks. Through capacity building and participation, we aim to strengthen inclusive societal processes for democratization and equality.

4. Multilateralism. Fulfilling an expanded vision of human security can only be achieved on the basis of a truly cooperative

minimal and voluntary effort everything. However most peacebuilding NGOs are dependent on funding from donor agencies or government ministries, with some receiving support from independent foundations and private sources.

From enabling partnerships to constrictive fee-for-service arrangements Relationships between donors and grantees tend to vary

along a continuum from true enabling partnerships through to fee-for-service contractor relationships. In the first, the donor and NGO forge a relationship built on trust and awareness of mutual interdependence in working toward shared social change goals. This can

¹¹⁸ The Global Action Agenda, as well as action agendas from the 15 regional processes and other research and documentation, can be obtained at <http://www.gppac.net>

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endeavor. Major global problems are often best addressed through coordinated efforts and policies developed collectively through multilateral institutions. In many parts of the world, regional institutions and networks offer expanded opportunities for strengthening cooperative responses to common concerns. We believe that CSOs have an important role to play in an expanded conception of multilateralism. We aim to strengthen the role of CSOs in global and regional organizations.

5. **Sustainability.** Addressing the causes and consequences of conflict requires sustained efforts. We commit to the long-term goal of transforming the conditions that give rise to conflict and the relationships that have been damaged by it. Our actions should be rooted in strategies that move toward medium- to long-term goals. We aim to ensure that the time frames implicit in our planning and actions are appropriate. Our strategies should help to foster social change that addresses

structural and relationship challenges generating systemic conflict and to move the situation toward a desired future.

6. **Dialogue.** We promote dialogue as a principal method to respond to conflict and prevent violence at all levels of society, especially when it engages all parties. Dialogue fosters participatory processes for common learning and building of capacity to work with conflict constructively. Leadership should emerge out of and operate through dialogue, rather than the capacity to use violence.

7. **Accountability.** As the power and influence of CSOs grows so does our obligation to be accountable, especially to the communities in which we work. This is reflected in what we do, how and why we do it, and the ways we manage the resources that are entrusted to us. We recognize the importance of developing norms of accountability at all levels and within all institutional settings.

8. **Transparency.** We are committed to working transparently, including in our

financial dealings. Unless otherwise disclosed, we act independently of political parties, donors, or commercial companies for the interest of developing peace within and between societies. If we have a specific set of interests or allegiances, we will declare them and acknowledge how they affect our priorities and working methods.

9. **Learning from practice.** We must aim to be reflective practitioners: aware of our role, mandate and contribution at every stage. We need to reflect upon and examine the lessons we are learning from our work and to critically assess how we learn them. We must work closely with partners to jointly develop participatory, inclusive and just processes for planning, decision-making and evaluating our initiatives. Evaluation and strategic learning are essential for developing accountability. We have a responsibility to share our learning with others who may face similar challenges in the future.

sometimes involve developing strategies together, with each contributing their knowledge, skills and resources to achieve desired outcomes. It generally involves a high degree of flexibility in the implementation of strategies and a regular and honest dialogue about how projects are unfolding. The bonds of accountability that bind them can be complemented by a constructively critical approach to assessing the work and revising strategies, plans and projects. Such relationships may be more

common when the donor is a foundation or a large charity, with greater flexibility to set its own overarching priorities and policies. It is less common - but still possible - to have such an enabling partnership when the donor is a government or an IGO because the policies they need to implement are formulated through political processes often outside the individual grant-making official's authority. On the other end of the continuum, the relationship

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between donor and grantee is based on an arrangement where the NGO is merely a contractor who offers 'value-for-money' to implement the donor's agenda. In these situations, the donor typically gives very detailed specifications about how the project must be implemented, within what timetable and with what results. In many cases, the implementer could as easily be a for-profit company as a civil society group, because the relationships, values and ethos cultivated by the NGO are not considered particularly relevant for implementing the contract. These relationships tend to be more common with large institutional donor agencies, where subcontracting is seen as a more cost-effective and feasible arrangement than maintaining service delivery capacities in-house. These arrangements have been pioneered for the provision of classic humanitarian aid and economic development projects but seem to be increasingly applied to peacebuilding budget lines - with potentially problematic results.

Funding priorities and the power to direct strategy
There is a trend amongst some institutional donors towards contracting external conflict analysis to shape the strategic priorities and the programs and projects they then sub-contract. Externally conducted analysis may be undertaken in such a way that both the process and the outcomes of the analysis are disconnected from the perceptions of those involved and smooth over the contradictions and dilemmas inherent in conflict situations. For example, the analyst may argue that the conflict "is really all about [x]", while one set of protagonists considers it to be about [a] and another set to perceive it as really about [b]. While the analyst's conclusions may have a degree of truth, if the resulting recommendations do not take into account the issues held most important by the primary parties to the conflict, they may not be very effective. Programs funded on the basis of this analysis may be misdirected and the assumptions from the analysis may then be carried forward through the frame of evaluation practices that tend to use the starting assumptions of the project as the basis of their analysis. Importantly, it leaves little room for peacebuilding NGOs to pursue an independent agenda - particularly if there is dissonance

between the political and strategic assumptions of the donor and those of the peacebuilding group.

Funding prevention: insights from the GPPAC conference

It was noted that donors have indeed been supportive of a great variety of prevention initiatives since the early 1990s. Nonetheless, financial support for conflict prevention is frequently inadequate or too late because responses are not driven by context-specific analyses of what is needed at a particular place at a particular time, but rather by the mandates of the donor agencies. It was argued that among donors, there is 'analytical confusion' about how and when to support conflict prevention, so that funding is too often misdirected towards, for example, long-term projects, when urgent situations demand quick responses (often at much lower levels of funding). A remedy for these weaknesses in the funding system was proposed: supporting country-specific, on-the-ground, multi-actor, collaborative, contextualised conflict analysis, and the development of appropriate response strategies in countries where early warnings suggest a risk of near-term violence.

Another paradox of funding is when NGOs become diverted away from the work they feel is most necessary, as echoed in the frequently heard comment 'We'd really think it is important to work on [x] but our donors do not agree'. This may be especially difficult for local peacebuilding NGOs in conflict-affected communities, who often have less leverage than their international counterparts in influencing the agendas of donor agencies. Furthermore, as Riemann and Ropers point out: "*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.*"¹¹⁹ Riemann and Ropers consider the overarching challenge is for the field to retain its 'critical edge' even while becoming a 'professional peace industry' and, in

¹¹⁹ Cordula Reimann and Norbert Ropers, op.cit. p35.

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particular to continue to work toward long-term change without being co-opted by short-term donor work priorities.¹²⁰

Most conflict situations are extremely fluid and subject to rapid changes in the context. Sometimes the timeframe is so long between initially developing a project for a funding proposal and implementing it when the funds finally arrive that the project's relevance has diminished or conditions have changed so much that it is no longer possible to undertake it as designed. To increase the likelihood of sustainability, there may be a need to shift their focus from 'short-term project thinking' to longer-term 'process thinking'.

Managerialism and accountability challenges

One of the challenges is the growing tendency for donors to take a more managerial approach in their funding relationship, requiring detailed mechanisms for planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting from their grant holders. Such measures can help to improve the professionalism of those working on projects and, in the best cases, enhance the rigor and effectiveness of the work. Furthermore, donors are themselves accountable for how funds are allocated and need to be able to justify that the money they are allocating is working to make a positive difference.

Yet common management tools and frameworks do not readily accommodate the dynamism of transformative change. Over-commitment to the precise forms of these mechanisms and a disconnected and inflexible approach can leave an organization 'so tied up in red tape, we cannot see the forest for the trees...' Over-emphasis on accountability to the donor may also undermine the grantee's accountability to beneficiaries and other stakeholders. At the GPPAC conference, it was observed the lack of mechanisms for ensuring 'horizontal accountability' - i.e., monitoring mechanisms to gauge if CSO undertakings in fact meet the needs of the constituencies they are trying to serve. There was a suggestion for greater use of peer review processes and the creation of appropriate benchmarks to promote such accountability. Furthermore, as Bridget Walker observes:

"We have seen how difficult it can be to establish meaningful connections between the body making the grant and the recipient. There is also a dissonance in the language used. The vocabulary of management is different from the language of social change. It may appear to be neutral, objective, depoliticised, but it is a foreign tongue to many practitioners, articulating alien thought processes and masking uncomfortable and inequitable power relations. Many peace practitioners use story and anecdote to describe impacts. Their assessment is subjective and personal. ...[They can encounter a] moral dilemma of telling it how it is, when there is pressure from funders to demonstrate rapid and positive results. It is hard to maintain commitment in the long term when there are no immediate results, and often unrealistic to expect immediate results. These unrealistic expectations can undermine the hope that sustains so many peace practitioners in the face of ongoing and intractable conflict."¹²¹

It seems that modalities for efficient service delivery are not always conducive for catalyzing social change and long-term transformation. As the previous chapters illustrated, much of peacebuilding work is heavily reliant on highly creative, flexible and relationship-based initiatives. They are generally built-up painstakingly over years so as to be in the right position at the right time to make the right response and often demanding considerable courage and exquisite judgement to navigate through complex and rapidly moving conflict dynamics.

Knowledge, learning and communications technologies

One way to support the competence of those working on peacebuilding is the through greater knowledge, skills and professionalism of relevant NGO staff and in the institutional capacities of the organization.

¹²⁰ Ibid. p42.

¹²¹ Bridget Walker. "Funding Conflict Transformation: Money, Power and Accountability - A Grant-Seeker's Perspective" *CCTS Review*, No 25, November 2004. Available online: http://www.ccts.org/ccts/ccts25/grant_seeker.htm

Deepening understanding of conflict: disseminating comparative learning

One of the crucial challenges is to enhance understanding of the causes and dynamics of conflict and effective strategies for addressing them. This calls for ongoing investment in research - both theoretical and applied - to continuously develop greater understanding of the nature of the challenges and how best to address them. A particularly valuable strand of this research agenda is to foster comparative learning from different situations around the world. While no conflict is exactly like any other, there is considerable knowledge and inspiration to be derived from how similar challenges were addressed elsewhere.

One of the difficulties is ensuring that those who are working on the frontlines of engaging directly with conflict are able to benefit from the outcomes of this research. In addition to disseminating publications and increasing the accessibility of written resources, there is a continual need for processes to animate the ideas. Seminars, workshops and trainings can all provide opportunities to both generate and disseminate comparative learning. This may require:

- Systems for information exchange and appropriate use of information technology
- Forums / mechanisms for joint analysis and joint strategising
- Improving practice through systemised learning and assessment of previous and ongoing initiatives to better understand what supported overall change; developing mechanisms to share these insights, perhaps through collaborative approaches to evaluation.
- Developing and supporting relevant research agendas
- Long-term development of the field through mainstreaming conflict prevention studies in general and specialised education programmes.

Learning from practice: evaluation, efficacy and outcomes

Integral to these questions are the need for continual learning and rigorous assessment of the process and outcomes of previous and unfolding initiatives. This includes paying great attention to assessing ‘what went

wrong’ as well as ‘what went right’ and why.

Ultimately, it may be crucial for professional peacebuilding NGOs to develop methods that enable them to expand the ‘learning horizon’ to better understand the consequences of actions over time on the systems in which they operate. One of the difficulties facing organizations working explicitly on peacebuilding is to know whether their initiatives are working and to identify what - if any - changes they foster. There are a host of methodological challenges, including the problems of attribution, levels of analysis, connections between theories of change to the design of interventions and perception of outcomes. Currently, most evaluation efforts are aimed at assessing a specific initiative rather than a study of changes in an overall conflict system and the factors that contributed to that change (including, to the extent it is ‘knowable’, the likely effects that can be traced to a specific intervention).

Because peacebuilding initiatives are characterized by experimentation and marked by both success and failure, many believe that evaluation practices should - in principle - be both more systematic (e.g., need for better documentation and analysis of initiatives) and more open (so that others can learn from them). This indicates the need to build-in collective learning into peacebuilding practice. Yet many initiatives do not have sufficient resources to undertake serious outcomes-oriented reviews of their work. They may make do with routine monitoring of outputs, coupled by informal and often *ad hoc* self-reflection about process and outcomes. Additionally, the fear of being penalized by admitting to ‘failure’ or to a less than effective initiative can tend to stifle systematic assessment. Furthermore, there is currently no open access database where evaluation studies can be reviewed by wider audiences, thus making a practical barrier to resources that might help to cross-fertilize learning.

Communications technology

Civil society organizations have often been the pioneers in using communications technology innovatively in response to conflict. There have been a number of

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initiatives to enable direct contact across the conflict divide to help ‘re-humanize’ relations between adversaries (as described in the ‘Hello Peace’) and to de-escalate responses to crises (as seen in the Belfast Mobile Phone Network).

International campaigning organizations already have electronic communications as the backbone of their communication strategies for more than a decade. Yet they are less widely / effectively used by those responding to specific conflict situations. Often there is a need to link very localized community-level peacebuilders with wider national and international networks and institutions to enable two-way / multi-level exchanges. Yet grassroots CSOs in poor parts of the world often find internet access prohibitively expensive and / or the conditions created by armed conflict may make it completely inaccessible or only accessible intermittently.

There is clearly vast potential to use communications technologies more innovatively and effectively. Yet while the inspiration and ideas for such initiatives exist, they often require financial and technological resources beyond the reach of many CSOs, which can dampen the drive towards innovation.

Navigating relationships: challenges of engagement

Partnerships: dilemmas of collaborative relationships

CSOs typically join forces to implement peace initiatives by bringing together their shared resources, contacts and capacities to achieve their strategies. Many of the cases described above reveal the significance of cooperation between different civil society groups within a society, between groups in different countries around the world to achieve common global or regional change objectives, and between domestic NGOs and their international NGO partners.

Such cooperation often takes place in the framework of ‘partnerships’ between organizations that believe they can achieve more together than they could operating on

their own. While partnerships can be forged for implementing a one-off activity, more typically they are ongoing relationships operating with various levels of intensity and closeness and with various degrees of formally structured terms of reference and procedures.

The search for funding can be a powerful motivation for forging partnerships. An extreme example is when a relationship is formed because one partner has access to money and the other partner(s) have the capacity to implement projects. More often, all the partners bring an array of resources into their relationship - including such vitally important but intangible qualities as their pre-existing relationships with relevant actors, the credibility to convene sensitive processes, and insight into the conflict dynamics.

While partnerships have the potential to greatly increase the effectiveness of peacebuilding initiatives, they can be complex relationships to manage. There are the ordinary challenges that all cooperative endeavors can encounter, such as: ensuring effective communication and developing sufficient trust; learning each other’s working methods, values and practices; coordinating complex project management arrangements; managing possible institutional competition for resources and recognition. Furthermore, there may also be challenges stemming from an unequal and asymmetric institutional position of each of the partners. This can manifest in one partner’s dominance of the initiative, allocation of the work load, and / or the distribution of valuable resources and recognition. The fact that the partnership is forged in the context of working with conflict can heighten these challenges: the stakes tend to be high; the highly polarized atmosphere is often characterized by chronic mistrust that can be reflected in the partnership; and there may be severe constraints created by war’s affects on infrastructure and other resources.

These challenges are perhaps especially acute when the partnership is forged between ‘insiders’ - i.e., those whose lives are directly affected by the conflict - and ‘outsiders’, i.e., those who chose to get involved and have the option of walking away from the situation. When one partner is a large, well-established and

Principles for working toward effective partnerships: suggestions from RPP¹²²

The Reflecting on Peace Practice project explored some of the many challenges of engagement between ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ working together on peace initiatives. They concluded that effective partnerships are built through a series of good practices and procedures rather than necessarily through the selection of an intrinsically ‘right’ partner. They suggest that the following can help with building partnerships:

- At the core of good partnerships is recognition that each partner’s knowledge and credibility are important to the effort and that each party’s reputation will be hurt by failure. Thus, the relationship should be horizontal and based on mutual consultation. Neither party should be seen as simply a service provider, financial

underwriter, or subcontractor to do a job. Both parties should have equal influence on decisions. There should be joint processes for setting strategies, defining goals and evaluating results.

- Experience shows that when outsiders consult very broadly with many insider counterparts and activists, they maintain a wide range of contacts to balance out and inform perspectives. Programs then do not become dependent on the goodwill of any one interlocutor. This approach is parallel to that adopted by insiders who avoid manipulation by a single outside funder by consciously raising funds from multiple donors so that no one can dominate.
- The agencies’ roles should not only be clearly and explicitly

defined; they should also be re-negotiated and re-assessed frequently. Often peace partners assume that a common vision and values will be the glue of their relationship and they rely only on verbal, open-ended agreements to this effect.

- Partners should take time to identify shared criteria by which to evaluate and improve their relationship.
- Partners should take time to understand and define where their missions diverge. That is, they should explicitly recognize that they have differences as well as a common vision, and they should clarify and acknowledge these as valid.
- Even in a horizontal relationship, the initiative and definition of needs must come from insiders.
- Together insiders and outsiders build a sustainable strategy for when outsider funding and programming is phased out.

comparatively wealthy international NGO and the other is a small (possibly even *ad hoc*) group living in the midst of a war zone, the gap to be crossed may sometimes seem insurmountable. Yet if they are able to forge a more-or-less equitable working relationship and to develop and implement well-considered initiatives, it is possible for them to achieve more than either could do on their own. Yet if they are locked in a dysfunctional and highly dependent relationship (particularly when dominated by the ‘outsider’ partner) energy may be diverted away from the most needed activities and that the resources and capacities of the ‘insider’ CSO are undermined. This can have the net effect of reducing the sustainable capacity of the society to respond to conflict as an opportunity for development because active

people committed to peacebuilding are preoccupied with other tasks.

Some international NGOs specializing in peacebuilding have developed guiding principles or codes of conduct that articulate how they aim to address these challenges in their role as ‘outsider’ partners. Peace Brigades International has an explicit policy of getting involved in a conflict zone only after being invited by at least one party or stakeholder.¹²³ Similar principles were followed by the Balkan Peace Team (BPT). Comprised of international volunteers - mostly from Western Europe - BPT aimed to support local activists in Croatia and the Former Republic of Yugoslavia during the conflicts of the 1990s. According to Christine Schweitzer, they were

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conscious of needing to articulate a set of guiding principles for their relations with local peace actors. They focused mainly on civil peacekeeping without rigidly limiting themselves to protection services only but got involved in a variety of peacebuilding activities. BPT aimed to: "...avoid the trap of 'peace colonialism' by focusing on strengthening self-reliance. It acted only on invitation and tried not to duplicate the work of others. It did not want to supplant what it considered to be the task of local groups, or make them its implementing partner for an agenda developed elsewhere."¹²⁴ Once again, it seems that self-awareness and continual assessment of the impacts (and possible unintended consequences) of involvement is a precursor for effective engagement.

Networks and strategic alliances

As discussed previously, the challenge of transforming conflict and preventing violence calls for a holistic and strategic approach drawing on the unique strengths and resources of multiple groups and individuals. This might occur through informal and *ad hoc* cooperation between those with an interest in the situation. Yet many involved in peacebuilding perceive the need for greater coherence in their efforts. Networks and other forms of strategic alliances are seen as one way to promote this.

In the peacebuilding field, networks and strategic alliances tend to be formed in response to a specific conflict situation (such as the conflict in Sri Lanka) or to achieve a specific goal (such as to reduce small arms and light weapons). In both cases, they tend to be highly outcomes oriented. There are also networks that aim to promote the needs and goals of a specific identity group, such as the Women Building Peace network. Alternately, they may have a thematic focus - such as the various national and regional 'platforms' of peacebuilding NGOs or the new international network and clearinghouse on Conflict Resolution Education and Peace Education.

At the GPPAC global conference, a working group on networks explored these issues. They observed that to engage effectively, the locus of the network should optimally be the same as the locus of the conflict (local,

national, regional and/or international). They argued that there are a number of advantages that can emerge from networks of CSOs working together to prevent violent conflict. First, they can provide a diversity of focus and skills through their membership, which can be valuable in the attempt to address all potential violence-inducing factors in a conflict. Second, civil society networks with members already working on the ground in a conflict zone can mobilize local contacts and extend solidarity. Third, civil society networks have different capacities and alliances than international agencies or governments. For example, their comparative informality can make them less of a threat and can enable greater trust.

Robert Ricigliano posits the importance of what he terms 'networks for effective action' (NEAs) based on developing a joint framework that allows actors to cooperate according to a common understanding of conflict and sharing strategic goals. He argues that the goal of NEAs is not coordination *per se*, yet through NEAs each member of the network can find ways to collaborate as appropriate to work towards common goals. As such, NEAs should share a purpose, share principles of conduct, be decentralized, be self-organizing, and flexible in response to member needs.¹²⁵ While many see the value in mobilizing effective networked responses to specific conflict situations, including for crisis response, it has often been difficult to form and manage such networks well. In general, members must feel they have more to gain from coming together than from splitting apart.

Some believe that the insufficiently developed sectoral identity of NGOs working on conflict is a barrier to recognition by outsiders (by governments, IGOs, the general public, and other CSOs) and the credibility

122 Mary Anderson and Lara Olson. 2003. *Confronting War*, op.cit.

123 Helen Yuill "Protecting the Protectors: Peace Brigades International in Colombia" in van Tongeren, et al., *People Building Peace II*, op.cit.

124 Christine Schweitzer "An Experiment at Mixing Roles: The Balkan Peace Team in Croatia and Serbia / Kosovo" in van Tongeren, et al., *People Building Peace II*, op.cit., p.373.

125 Robert Ricigliano, "Networks of Effective Action: Implementing a Holistic Approach to Peacebuilding." Peace Studies Program, University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee, 2003.

Understanding Networks: Observations from the European Centre for Conflict Prevention¹²⁶

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
- 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 have a presence or impact at various levels of society
- To draw on a range of skills, opinions and insights

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. 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 proactive 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 the structure that will be required. A highly engaged, proactive network demands high levels of commitment from its participants and more formalized structures.

accorded to their work on conflict. This presents an overall challenge to the ability of this civil society sector to engage with governments and IGOs on conflict issues. At one of the GPPAC preparatory meetings¹²⁷, a group UK-based peacebuilders identified some of the ‘causes’ of this challenge as: (a) the field is still young; (b) ‘we’ do not know who ‘we’ are (as a group of NGOs working on conflict); (c) the lack of knowledge about what other groups are doing and what they stand for / their mission / their values and operating principles; (d) the fact that different organizations sometimes promote different / contradictory agendas; (e) the identity, strategies and values of many NGOs working on conflict prevention can contradict the identity, strategies and values of governments and multilateral bodies responding to conflict situations (e.g., NATO). Competition for limited resources has meant that many of these challenges are made more troublesome by histories of institutional rivalry / competition, which can reduce effectiveness.

There is ongoing discussion, however, of usefulness of networks for addressing the challenges faced by the

field. Especially on the issue of broad thematic networks for peacebuilding in general, the dilemmas of diversity and contradictory agendas are held up against the benefits of having a ‘common roof’ under which the external world can recognize the sector and in those inside can engage with each other. They identified possible ways toward addressing this challenge as improving communication between groups while accepting the diversity of different types of groups who consider themselves to be working on conflict. They also argued for the importance of communicating to other audiences, beginning by making an effort to articulate - and communicate - clarifying our language / terms and the key concepts that we mean to convey by them (otherwise, we may be gliding over very significant differences; although we are ‘saying’ the same thing, we are ‘meaning’ something very different). Having deliberated and clarified these foundational

¹²⁶ Extracted from ‘Understanding Networks’ in van Tongeren, et al., *People Building Peace II*, op.cit., p55

¹²⁷ GPPAC London ‘Brainstorming’ Meeting of 3 December 2003

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Modalities for engagement between civil society organizations and governments

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

- 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.

- 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.)

ideas, it may be possible to engage more effectively in advocacy and awareness-raising about the role of civil society in working on conflict.

Relations with governments and inter-governmental organizations

Mapping the dynamics of engagement between civil society organizations with governments (their own and others) and inter-governmental and multilateral organizations is largely outside the scope of this paper. Nevertheless, constructive engagement can be key. As UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has pointed out:

If peacebuilding missions are to be effective, they should, as part of a clear political strategy, work with and strengthen those civil society forces that are helping ordinary people to voice their concerns, and to act on them in peaceful ways. ... The aim must be to create a synergy with those civil society groups that are bridge-builders, truth-finders, watchdogs, human rights defenders, and agents of social protection and economic revitalisation.there should be a two-way dialogue between the United Nations and civil society - not so that one can direct the other, but to ensure our efforts complement one another. ... Engagement with civil society is not an end in itself, nor is it a panacea. But it is vital to our efforts to turn the promise of peace agreements into

the reality of peaceful societies and viable states. The partnership between the United Nations and civil society is therefore not an option; it is a necessity.¹²⁸

Many CSOs working on conflict would echo this sentiment and would extend it to include the need for lines of communication with other international and regional organizations and relevant governments. Yet there are considerable obstacles to effective engagement.

Some are inherent in the distinctive identities and roles of NGOs as independent actors. One of the aims of many peacebuilders is to mobilize political support for constructive action to address conflicts and their causes. NGOs have a crucial and ever increasing role in contributing information, arguments and energy to influencing decision-making processes. They can directly address policy makers and address those who, in turn, influence them. Yet there is a creative tension between strategies based on cooperative engagement with governmental and IGO decision-makers versus strategies that deploy confrontation to generate political pressure for change. Yet there are a range of other modalities.

¹²⁸ Secretary-General's opening remarks at the Security Council debate on "The Role of Civil Society in Post-Conflict Peacebuilding" 22 June 2004. Available at <http://www.un.org/apps/sg/printsgstats.asp?nid=989>

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The distinctive identities and roles played by CSOs, governments and IGOs can make engagement complex. Mutual misperceptions and lack of understanding of the other's institutional imperatives may create obstacles to effective cooperation. Government and IGO personnel may question the quality, legitimacy and accountability of specific NGOs - or of civil society organizations more generally. They may not see their relevance and believe that they can create more trouble than they resolve. Civil society actors may, in turn, be deeply suspicious of the motives and commitment of 'officials'. They may have considerable ideological or political differences and believe the contradictions are insurmountable without becoming too compromised. In some cases, all these concerns are well-founded. Furthermore there are situations when it may be inappropriate or worse to engage. Yet in times when it is an advantage to cooperate, these difficulties underscore the importance of developing both a shared frame of reference and of a common set of desired objectives to underpin more cooperative engagement, as well as the importance of mutual perceptions of reliability and trust as a key component to developing collaborative working relationships.

There are also a number of institutional and organizational obstacles to engagement. Many of these stem from the lack of formal structures and arrangements to enable active cooperation and the scarcity of 'entry points' to enable even more informal engagement. For example, the vast and dispersed UN system can make it difficult for external stakeholders - including local CSOs and their international partners - to know the appropriate channels to request assistance from the UN in an emerging crisis or to otherwise engage with it. It is also a potential barrier to more effective coordination with other relevant actors, including (sub-)regional inter-governmental organizations. In many of the countries where its mission includes working on conflict issues, there is no specific appointed person to support peacebuilding action plans. Local UN staff encounter difficulties in finding ways to support local organisations dealing with peacebuilding and conflict transformation. The GPPAC working group on 'strengthening local, regional and

international mechanisms' stressed the importance of IGOs - and the UN in particular - creating institutional mechanisms that can act as a linkage between civil society and government structures, and hence create a political space for interaction.

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 are agreed 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.¹²⁹ 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.

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

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prevention partnership. This can then be operationalised 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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The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict

The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict is building a new international consensus and pursuing joint action to prevent violent conflict and promote peacebuilding, based on the *Regional Action Agendas* and the *Global Action Agenda*. GPPAC maintains a global multi-stakeholder network of organisations committed to act to prevent the escalation of conflict into destructive violence at national, regional and global levels. This multi-stakeholder network includes civil society organisations, governments, regional organisations and the United Nations.

The primary function of the Global Partnership is to promote and support the implementation of the *Regional Action Agendas* and the *Global Action Agenda*. For this purpose, GPPAC represents important regional concerns on the international level, enhances the functioning of the international systems for conflict prevention and uses its capacities to assist the implementation of key regional activities.

Sub-programmes are:

Promote acceptance of the ideas of conflict prevention

GPPAC supports regional efforts to raise awareness regarding the effectiveness of conflict prevention, and undertakes parallel efforts at the global level.

Promote policies and structures for conflict prevention

GPPAC generates ideas for improving policies, structures and practices involving interaction among civil society organisations, governments, regional organisations, and UN agencies for joint action for conflict prevention.

Build national and regional capacity for prevention

GPPAC strives to enhance the capacity of its regional networks and global mechanisms to undertake collective actions to prevent violent conflict.

Generate and share knowledge

GPPAC engages in a process of knowledge generation and sharing, by learning from the experience of regions

and developing mechanisms for regular communication/exchange of such information. GPPAC activities aim to improve our mutual understanding regarding important methodologies and mechanisms for action.

Mobilise civil society early response actions to prevent

GPPAC develops the capacity of civil society organisations to contribute to early warning systems and to intervene effectively in impending crises/conflicts. In response to regional requests, the global network will a) mobilise coordinated civil society responses, based on early warning of impending conflict escalation; and b) pressure governments, regional organisations, and the UN system to respond to early warning information.

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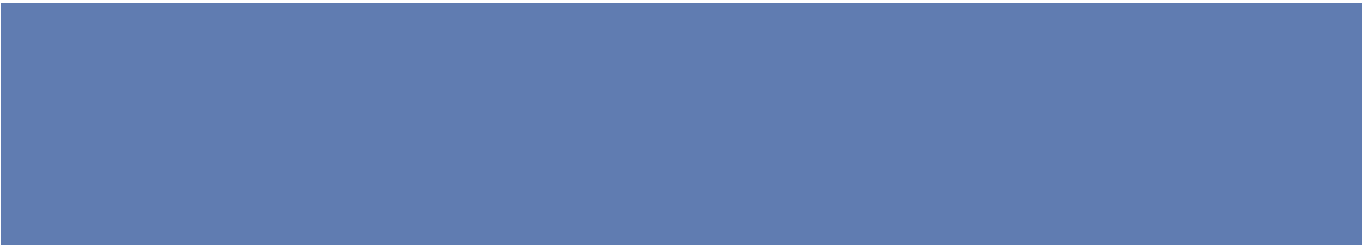
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