



HOW TO CHOOSE A DANCE PARTNER INSIGHT ON PEACEBUILDING

www.peacedirect.org



INSIGHT ON PEACEBUILDING

INTRODUCTION

Peace Direct finds, funds and promotes local peacebuilding initiatives in conflict areas. We believe these initiatives hold the key to lasting peace and want them to be central to all strategies for managing conflict.

We want to see local organisations treated as equal partners with ‘outsiders’ such as international NGOs, or multilateral agencies such as the UN. While most people engaged in peace building and conflict resolution do too, it’s not happening often enough in reality. One of the most common reasons given by ‘outsiders’ for not forming such equal partnerships is the difficulty of knowing who to work with – how to find the genuine and effective organisations - when many countries have spawned a whole industry of ‘briefcase NGOs’ with no substance behind them.

This collection of interviews with people who’ve gone through the process, or observed others doing so, is intended to show how people have found the right partners, and the way that working with these partners enables a wholly different kind of peacebuilding work to develop. What comes through in all these perspectives is that there is no “right” way, but there are common elements – a judicious mix of instinct and due diligence, flexibility, humility, patience and pragmatism.

Of course, Insight on Peacebuilding would not have been possible without the co-operation and support of all those who generously gave their time to share their perspectives, and the financial support from Polden Puckham Charitable Foundation. Our profound thanks are due to all of them.

CAROLYN HAYMAN OBE
Chief Executive, Peace Direct

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Peace Direct is a registered charity number 1123241.

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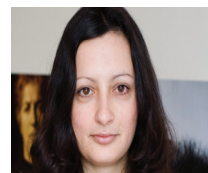
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INSIGHT ON PEACEBUILDING

FOREWORD



JOAN LINK
Former Head of Conflict Issues Group, FCO.

“Seek to work with your local partners as collaborators, on an equal footing, and with humility.”

Local peacebuilding, engaging with local people, ensuring you take account of local context – all are mantras in development aid theory, all the more so when donors and international organisations are working in conflict countries. So why do international efforts in these countries so infrequently turn fully into real collaboration between international actors and local people, the sort of collaboration described in the interviews in this booklet?

The answers lie in these interviews.

• It’s hard work finding suitable partners in such confused and chaotic situations. Suitable that is, in terms of the requirements

laid down by donor governments, the rules of international organisations, and NGO Boards of Trustees, to meet stringent Western standards of financial propriety and project management.

- The ‘capacity’ in country seems weak and doesn’t work in the ways we are used to or want to impose.
- It can take a long time to get the necessary impetus in a country where day to day life is shattered and trust between different groups is limited. But time is critical to spend donor money in the timeframes dictated by donor budget processes and Ministerial interest.

I understand these problems. I’ve

been the bureaucrat pressing for proper procedures to be applied in these circumstances. So I don’t want to dismiss the pressures on those who go into complex post conflict situations to try to help. Working in a meaningful way with local people seems risky and makes everything even more complicated. It’s safer – some might say easier in these difficult environments – to bring in more international personnel, or use local people to deliver projects developed mainly by donors, international agencies, and the World Bank. While efforts are made to engage local people they often feel decisions are made for other reasons and by everyone except the people who have to live with the consequences and try to hold peace together when the outsiders have gone home.

This first edition of Insight on Peacebuilding shows that proper engagement with local people can be done, at a very basic level on a small scale, but also on a bigger scale over a longer period of time, by donor governments, NGOs and other bodies. It can be effective and is increasingly seen as essential to longer term success.

The perspectives also show that in a range of different countries separated by many miles and great differences in culture, there

“I UNDERSTAND THESE PROBLEMS. I’VE BEEN THE BUREAUCRAT PRESSING FOR PROPER PROCEDURES.”

are similar issues to think about when seeking such fundamental engagement with local people:

Who are the people to work with and how can they be found?

If projects are to succeed in polarised and divided post conflict societies they need to be led by local people who are respected and listened to by all sides, who carry weight with opinion formers and officials, both governmental and international. Perhaps the key requirements are that they must have a deep felt motivation to rebuild peace, whatever their original agenda, and a genuinely altruistic approach – they need to be in the process for the greater good, not just their own profile. A major local figurehead who is

trusted by many will help the work succeed and also give the external partner a person to use as a trusted adviser to help decide who else might be effective collaborators.

It can take time – be ready sometimes for a long haul.

Some of these perspectives show that it can take some years for this work to be successful. It can take months even for an external partner to find the right local partners. Getting together a critical mass of people willing to stand up to those who are content to see conflict resume takes time. It can involve training and support which takes time. It needs to build trust again between communities, a difficult and prolonged task, but essential as the foundation

“LOCAL PEOPLE ARE OFTEN DEALING WITH LOSS ON A SCALE WE CAN'T QUITE COME TO GRIPS WITH.”

for a longer term peace. So organisations engaged in this work need to be patient and willing to explain to their governments and Boards why this longer engagement is needed.

The process is often as important as the outcome.

It's hard to explain to donors from target driven (Western) cultures that such work does not always have specific and concrete outcomes. But it is clear that unexpected results can come from the slow building of new or mended relationships across different components of society and a habit of cooperation. It makes sense in psychological terms of course – relationships come from frequent contact on a common agenda.

Be willing to take unexpected opportunities, to be flexible and to take risks.

All the studies show that the external partner has to be flexible in their approach to meet the emerging ideas from local people, whether by funding work on mosques as well as schools and hospitals, or by renovating army barracks to shore up a general who is trying to maintain peace, or by accepting a nominee to

work with who didn't meet your original criteria but who comes recommended by local networks. Risk taking might also include funding risk, where it might be better to disburse small funds to lots of local groups knowing that some will fail in the next few years, rather than waiting to find out which survive, and then losing opportunities to begin to work locally.

Look hard at your own systems and local ones.

Common ground is found throughout the personal experiences in Insight on Peacebuilding about the need to deliver projects under satisfactory controls, and this must be right. It may mean helping to build the financial and other management systems of local partners, so external partners need to take account of this right at the beginning in setting budgets and timelines. But they might also want to look at their own systems to make sure they are not overly demanding in the standards set. The relative, and usually small amount of the spend might allow greater risk to be taken if urgent demands show that the possible gain is significant for shoring up peace. In the wider arena, use of local systems for making

connections or delivering action across the community has proved very useful, including in the use of village meetings (shura) in Afghanistan or traditional local systems of justice in Rwanda.

Finally, a message which comes through from these personal experiences and many others:

Seek to work with your local partners as collaborators, on an equal footing, and with humility.

All external support to a country recovering from conflict needs to be given in the knowledge that those local people who want to rebuild their country and keep it peaceful face enormous pressures. There are risks to their own lives and those of their loved ones and local people are often dealing with loss on a scale we can't quite come to grips with.

As a former colleague of mine who has worked in several such countries says, “what they need from the international community is respect not arrogance, support not pity, and for their views and ideas to be acted on, not pushed aside because we know better.” And external partners need to develop a habit of working with local partners on all that they do.

Joan Link, 2009.

INSIGHT ON PEACEBUILDING

BEN HOFFMAN



BEN HOFFMAN
Canadian International Institute of Applied Negotiation.

“I felt I was back in a Latin American country, watching a Shakespeare play. Caesar had been stabbed, the curtain had come down and we had no idea of what was going on behind the curtain...”

The International Peace and Prosperity Project (IPPP) was born out of the perceived failure of the international community to respond early or effectively enough to events that trigger violence in poor and politically unstable countries.

In 2002, retired American business executive Milt Lauenstein invited a small, multinational group of specialists to help him design a small project to counter that and find a different approach. The team included political scientists, a logistics expert, an anthropologist and was led by Ben Hoffman, then Director of the Conflict Resolution

Program at The Carter Center. After careful consideration, consultation and a process of elimination they identified Guinea Bissau as the country they’d go to for what Hoffman calls “a scouting mission.”

“We wanted a country where government wouldn’t object to us operating there, where there was nascent civil society and where no regional superpower had too heavy a footprint.”

Guinea-Bissau was highly vulnerable to recurrent social and political tensions that could spark destructive ethnic violence

GUINEA-BISSAU

This multi-ethnic West African country had seen much of its infrastructure destroyed by conflict in the late ‘90s leaving a legacy of extreme poverty, huge income inequality, low human development, high levels of state debt, and government reliance on aid to pay soldiers, teachers and other public servants.



and damage its fragile post-1999 recovery even further. Foreign aid donors had left the country and indeed, even the US & Canadian embassy staff had retreated to Senegal, but Hoffman’s team gleaned enough information from them to have a starting point for contacts in Guinea Bissau – the first round of “must see” people.

Looking for a dance partner – establishing who was operating there

To find out if there really was an effective civil society, Hoffman knew they needed what he calls “a dance partner”. By hapchance

he found not one but two. Gigi Goodhart was running the US economic development NGO, Enterprise Works, in Guinea Bissau, was married to a local man and knew whom to contact and whom to avoid. Hoffman takes up the story:

“Gigi was very quickly able to identify people in civil society who weren’t connected to government. She was aware of indigenous groups, key contacts at the remaining consulates and other people involved in economic development and she put us in touch with “The Queen Bee” - Macaria Barai - a

pre-eminent local player in civil society, the Chair of one of two local Chambers of Commerce, a businesswoman and a peace activist... She'd founded Soldiers for Peace - a thousand strong women's group which included the wives of military personnel which was the reason I later got to see the General. She is a remarkable human being."

"Queen Bee" – who's since been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize is widely recognised for her contribution to peace and stability in Guinea Bissau and now works as the IPPP's liaison officer in that



MACARIA BARAI
**"SHE IS A
REMARKABLE
HUMAN BEING"**

country.

Behind the curtain – making judgments.

Ten days before the team was due to fly out, the Head of the Armed Forces in Guinea Bissau was assassinated. Hoffman's team was cautioned against going at all but they did and found a country in confusion but superficially calm.

"It was a very raw moment for Guinea Bissau. We weren't even an NGO and people must have thought who are these people, what are they doing here, funded by a rich American? But people sought us out, one being an informant from the army in civilian clothes who set up a clandestine meeting in which he said, "you've got to blow a whistle, this assassination is act 1 in a 2 act play and the 2nd act is a full coup d'état. Let the international community know there's more to this."

Hoffman, a veteran of peace talks, diplomatic missions and international crises says,

"I felt I was back in a Latin American country, watching a Shakespeare play. Caesar had been stabbed, the curtain had come down and we had no idea of what

was going on behind the curtain. So, my assessment was that we were dealing with a group of elite actors who were prepared to engage the military to do violence and unless and until we could get behind the curtain and deal with these elite actors we could achieve nothing."

Change partners – adapting the way IPPP operated

Hoffman's team pulled out after three days and waited in Dakar before returning to the US where they "sounded the alert", shared their initial report with others and prepared to return to Guinea Bissau two months later.

"We were committed to the country and there were so few who were working with a handful of key players, so we showed commitment by being vocal, by our advocacy on their behalf which gave us credibility when we went back."

On their return the new Head of Armed Forces was making statements in the media saying that he believed reconciliation was essential.

"I found it remarkable that a former rebel freedom fighter, an illiterate man installed as head of

**"PEOPLE MUST
HAVE THOUGHT
WHO ARE THESE
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RICH AMERICAN?"**

the Armed Forces was using the word reconciliation – I seized on it, but our lack of resources and clout was bad. We had a handpicked team with lots of experience, including a former Zimbabwean freedom fighter - a really good team but we had no real clout and no carrots and sticks to deliver."

Sunny Streets – what went well?

Hoffman knew from his experience with the Carter Center which did have clout and access but no money that it was essential to gain credibility if they were to engage

meaningfully in Guinea Bissau.

“At the Carter Center, we lost credibility because we couldn’t even give five cents to a project. We had to simply abandon classical conflict analysis. I knew that having some discretionary capital can do things so we targeted our limited resources very strategically.”

Hoffman asked their funder, Milt Lauenstein for \$80,000 small grants fund which could be used to help small, local NGO’s which would otherwise wither on the vine

or be overtaken by events. Funds could be made available quickly to help nip conflict in the bud, for example, by making a small grant available to the army for quick repairs to their dilapidated barracks which showed support for the General and helped him foster professionalism and neutrality among his troops. As a key member of the team said, it was remarkable that IPPP meant “jam today” instead of the “jam tomorrow” of bureaucracy heavy organisations, aid agencies and NGOs.

Rocky roads – not so good

IPPP prides itself on its flexible, agile and collaborative approach to conflict resolution and the very fragility of Guinea Bissau meant they found themselves engaged with a different set of people and organisations than they’d perhaps envisaged.

“We didn’t screen anyone out in the first stages of engagement but we found we had less to do with certain groups simply because Guinea Bissau was so unstable so we were working more with UN forces, government officials and the military. To start with, we were more concerned with peace than prosperity.”

That change of emphasis and a

difficult local relationship proved challenging. IPPP had engaged a local NGO to provide evaluation of their project but discovered that the NGO was way out of its depth and the relationship had to be ended.

“At a technical level we disengaged with one of our civil society actors. I tried to do it frankly, in an open way, but it hurt the NGO - they needed the work, they were new in town so there were reputational issues and of course the sense that local people suffered by our

distancing from them. As it turned out we were shifting gears in terms of our focus. I went to some NGOs and said if you find us less visible, don’t take it as an insult... we have to work with the political elite to get stabilisation.”

ORGANISATION DETAILS
Canadian International Institute of Applied Negotiation.
www.ciian.org

“FUNDS COULD BE MADE AVAILABLE QUICKLY TO HELP NIP CONFLICT IN THE BUD.”

MUST READ

“A clear understanding of each other’s capacities and limitations and a willingness to reveal those to each other and start from a realistic point of departure. Trust, from doing what you say and saying what you do, sharing the conceptual framework that drives our behaviour so there’s less hard feelings and endorsement when it’s time to move on rather than build a co-dependency. I suggested we abandon that term and we should say collaborators – Partners is corporate patina, too much nurture. Actually we’re peace guerrillas too.”

INSIGHT ON PEACEBUILDING

CAROLYN HAYMAN



CAROLYN HAYMAN OBE
Chief Executive Peace Direct

“Motivation and competence are the key things we look for. If people have made personal sacrifices to work for peace, and they know what they are doing, you can pretty much trust them to carry things forward.”

In January 2006, Carolyn Hayman and a colleague went to Sudan ostensibly for a civil society conference organised by the African Union and to recruit a local researcher. They returned to the UK with a new peace organisation in an embryonic state and by September of that year, peace builders from the North and South of Sudan had come together for the first time and the Collaborative for Peace in Sudan was formed.

Through a Sudanese contact who travelled with Peace Direct, Hayman was introduced to Dr Mudawi, the founder of the

Sudan Development Organisation (SUDO):

“... an amazing human rights activist who’d been imprisoned many times. It was pretty clear that anyone he introduced us to would be someone trustworthy. We also ‘talent-spotted’ at the civil society conference, which became increasingly surreal as government stooges piled in and dominated the discussion. Those few brave people who took the microphone to say what they really thought – well, we made sure we made contact with them. And we made use of Amnesty’s database of contacts in the South as well.”

SUDAN

In 2005 Sudan ended a 21 year civil war between North and South Sudan in which 2 million people died. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) has many good provisions but has only been partially implemented. The North and South already function in many ways as separate countries.



A real thirst

“By the time we’d visited Khartoum and Nairobi, it was clear that there were so many local Sudanese organisations doing similar work but in isolation. We could see that if they could come together nationally, their work would be stronger. It was so obvious that there was a real thirst for talking to people in other parts of the country so we decided to try and bring them together.”

Not only had the original purpose of the visit taken a back seat, Hayman soon realised that there was a fundamental difference

in what she thought should be discussed at the September meeting, and what the Sudanese wanted.

Jumping in the dark

“They were at an earlier stage than me. They really cared about disseminating the Comprehensive Peace Agreement first. It was difficult to change my views, to face the fact that actually it wasn’t appropriate for me to think about what the meeting should be about. I was being over directive to the point that I even resented the delegation from the South putting in an extra person who I hadn’t

chosen. I was so wrong. It really underlined why it is so difficult for local people to get funding for what they think is needed.”

“We were jumping into the dark. But as we were still a very unknown organisation, so we didn’t have a reputation to lose, and no-one was putting up a lot of money for the event, I tried not to worry too much. It was reassuring to be working with PACT, an organisation well established in South Sudan, and we found two absolutely brilliant African women facilitators from the Interaction Leadership Initiative.”

Support at a practical level came too from the British Council in Khartoum.

“They went way beyond the call of duty in providing a safe place for the meeting - we’d seen what had happened previously with security services and government snoops. Then, when the Director said he would host a reception at his house as well, I realised that we had done everything we could to make the event a success – the rest was up to the participants. We just had to make sure they arrived.”

48 hours

And they did - 18 organisations at

a three day meeting (even though the team from the South arrived a day later than planned.) Within 48 hours the participants had elected a Steering Committee for the Collaborative and presented a nine point plan to a number of donor governments, including Canada whose Charge d’Affairs Alan Bones commented “You have achieved in 3 days what others would have taken a year to accomplish.”



“At the time, the Northern groups had almost no funding for their peace work, while the South Sudan delegates were smartly dressed and well resourced - they had a bit of a swagger when they arrived at the hotel. But appearances aside, we were struck by how similar they were, how passionate they were and just how much they’d done themselves. They were all do-ers, not talkers, they’d demonstrated their own commitment, made personal sacrifices and there was

so much common ground.”

Tearing the veil

Hayman recalls what George Ngoha, one of the delegates said at the time “It’s not just that we are coming to the North for the first time in 20 years, but it’s also to find that our brothers in the North are doing the same work as we are doing in the South. The veil has been torn down.”

**FIRST MEETING OF
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“TO FIND OUR
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So, in a country almost ripped in two by over twenty years of war, peacebuilders from across Sudan are working together.

Two and a half years on, the Collaborative has held workshops on disseminating the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, trained warring tribes in conflict resolution, brought oil companies and communities together, and built peace networks in two of the most volatile states. The Steering Committee members have given their time generously – no-one except the paid

co-ordinator has earned a cent so far – establishing the Collaborative as an organisation that people put in to, rather than taking from.

Peace Direct still has a seat on the Collaborative Steering Committee.

ORGANISATION DETAILS

Peace Direct

www.peacedirect.org

Collaborative for Peace in Sudan

www.insightonconflict.org/collaborative-for-peace-in-sudan/

MUST READ

“Working in an oral culture where people don’t write things down makes it hard to know exactly what’s going on but you have to accept there are different ways of working. You have to trust people – if they have the motivation and the passion, are smart and have given their time and effort for no reward, then that’s a pretty good basis for trust.”

“We’ve learned that it’s important not to come with fixed ideas. People may be reluctant to challenge the ideas of Westerners, even when they are not the best ones, so you have to have sensitive antennae up the whole time as to what the situation really requires. You can’t micro manage from afar, you have to let people get on with it, take calculated risks, and hope that you’ll leave something behind to build on.”

INSIGHT ON PEACEBUILDING

LT COL STUART GORDON



LT COL STUART GORDON

British Army

“If the community can begin to articulate and define its needs and can communicate these to government, then you build social cohesion.”

AFGHANISTAN

In Afghanistan’s Helmand province, local peace building organisations and international NGOs are thin on the ground. Poor infrastructure means that local engagement has to be through “government blessed” civil society structures such as Community Development Councils.



Channelling development funds through local structures means that funds are more likely to be spent on things of real value to the community. In addition, where there's a possibility of using local labour it will be done, thereby helping to make a dent in the huge problem of youth unemployment.

Community Development Councils are meant to represent 70 percent of the local community, include female representation and abide by quorum rules. Those criteria are something the Afghans have put up along with the National Solidarity Programme but, Lt Col Gordon says, each CDC is different.

Taliban

“The interesting thing is while the institutions are part of formally blessed government, the composition of CDC's is massively variable – in some cases, Taliban run them, in some cases there are Taliban sympathisers and government people, and others where the Taliban have intimidated them and they've disbanded.

It's a different institutional topography. Community access is a real problem - this is a hugely active war zone so generating any element of civil society is

a problem. The CDCs have to reflect the composition of a village but you've got to work with who you can work with.”

As the funds come from the UK Stabilisation Aid Fund, much of the paper work is done by the UK military and there is a relatively high level of oversight - by DfID or the military.

“We try to create an environment where Afghan officials can visit and begin the process of developing some political settlement with communities, so a big part of Provincial Reconstruction Team work has been literally putting people on helicopters, flying them to Musa Qaleh, finding conditions where they can engage, allowing people to define their priorities, engaging with what passes for civil societies and using the UK stabilisation funding to facilitate that.”

Risk Taking

“It's a much more risk taking and pragmatic environment, so you need to ask if money's going to a community, who are you empowering, what impact will it have on the conflictsometimes that's a really difficult assessment and while the average British serviceman or woman is steeped

in the principles of common sense and pragmatism, there are times when those qualities can be tested. But, you've got to ask what the alternatives are. If the environment is so dangerous you simply can't have civilian participation what do you do? Have the military delivering a largely kinetic strategy and expect that to deliver peace that's sustainable, or use the military both to contain the military threat posed by the Taliban and Al Qaeda but also to try and create a pathway for

engagement by appropriate civilian institutions?”

Lt Col Gordon is in no doubt that it's patience and pragmatism that will pay off in the long term rebuilding of Afghanistan.

ORGANISATION DETAILS

British Army
www.army.mod.uk

MUST READ

“The logic is quite straightforward. If the community can begin to articulate and define its needs and can communicate these to government, then you build social cohesion, that's what you're doing. It's not the building, it's the process surrounding it that's key and it's that time consuming engagement, hearing voices from community, reconciling interests within the communities which builds up a “habit of co-operation” within communities and with provincial and district government. It's that engagement that's the essential part.”

INSIGHT ON PEACEBUILDING

SQUADRON LEADER GORDON SUMMERS



SQUADRON LEADER GORDON SUMMERS **Royal Air Force**

“The key to peacebuilding is gaining and maintaining local consent and support.”

For the British military, engaging with local civil society in the midst of a “hot conflict” like Afghanistan presents a whole different set of challenges. Squadron Leader Gordon Summers returned from Afghanistan at the end of 2008 after a period running the operational Military Stabilisation Support Teams there.

“All troops have the importance of engaging with the local population heavily stressed upon them. The British Army has drawn a lot from experiences in Northern Ireland and Bosnia, and those lessons are applied where appropriate. You have to be both accepted and trusted by the local population if you are to effectively counter

insurgents.”

At district level, the Military Stabilisation Support Teams working for the UK civilian District Stabilisation officer are in daily contact with the local District Governor and his staff. But for troops on the ground, the first challenge is to identify the people they need to engage with.

“If you go to a village and simply ask who the village elders are, there are normally people hanging around and they’ll tell you. If you ask who can call a shura, (a village meeting) you’ll be shown where the elders live. Normally in a formal shura, only elders will speak since they’re regarded as

people able to properly convey the feelings of the village with authority.”

Enduring democracy

“One thing that particularly struck me when, during clearance ops in Nad Ali we got the district governor into a newly liberated village, was the enormous residual power that you’ve got within the traditional and ancient Pashtun shura system. Within a couple of hours of us entering one village he did a quick trip round and - whilst we estimated that there were no more than 400 families remaining - he brought 150 -200 local adult males to shura within about thirty minutes. It was quite staggering - the power and enduring appeal of this democratic system.”

The job for the Military Stabilisation Support Teams and indeed all troops is to assess the needs of a village by speaking with the elders as well as the wider village society on patrol, to prioritise spending and recruit and deploy cash for work teams to make good any damage through the Afghan Ministry for Rural Reconstruction to, for example, make good wells or irrigation systems.

“This is where interpersonal skills,

diplomacy and the willingness to accept what other societies consider important come to the fore. For example, elders will sometimes ask for improvement to mosques even though bridges & wells urgently need repairing and to Western minds this would seem a far more pressing need ... you have to see it from the local, national perspective rather than your own. Ghurkas are particularly good at this, they generally come from similar village based, agricultural societies so they’re very good at picking up what the local dynamics and imperatives are.”

In practical terms, soldiers will sometimes find themselves in the role of advisers and project

“ALL TROOPS HAVE THE IMPORTANCE OF ENGAGING WITH THE LOCAL POPULATION HEAVILY STRESSED UPON THEM.”

managers, even running “claims clinics” to tutor the locals within their own villages. Local people are recruited and employed in Cash for Work teams to rebuild and maintain villages to counter the issue of unemployment.

“Experience taught us that locals will take compensation money if it’s simply paid as a lump sum and then run away to live elsewhere with relatives, leaving their villages depopulated. Trying to regenerate depopulated villages became a real issue around Musa Qaleh, for instance. In that location, to counter Taliban intimidation we encouraged the local Chief of Police to remind people of their Islamic duty to co-operate with the government and instead of simply giving them compensation money we gave assistance and materials whilst maintaining a military presence but did it all visibly through the Afghan authorities to increase their credibility. The key to our exit strategy is nurturing credible Afghan government.”

Understand

Squadron Leader Summers believes the most important thing for “outsiders” is to try and understand what drives the local people and what’s important to them.

“Everything works back from that. There are different tribes, inclinations, codes and leanings but Afghans are fundamentally a very pragmatic, ethnically diverse people. People think of Afghans primarily as fighters but they’ve been international traders living within the crossroads of Asia for centuries and that means most of them want to see a prosperous rather than a poor economy....For instance, if a bazaar has been run down by conflict, once security returns the locals will invariably kick start the bazaar very quickly with minimal support and that will pull agricultural produce back into the centre of the village.”

NGOs and other bodies that may have access and links to different sections of the local community are thin on the ground in Afghanistan, certainly in Helmand, which means military personnel have to constantly draw on diplomacy and pragmatism.

Women and children

“Women still remain the dominant influence on children and getting women on side to persuade their children to not join Taliban should not be a hard sell but it’s access to them that’s extremely difficult. The male age group between 15-20 years is a crucial influence target

for both the legitimate Afghan government and the Taliban.”

“Plans have been mooted for creating women’s networks built around for example, the small, agricultural practices that are divided on gender lines according to the crop being grown. But this has to be approached with kid gloves because the Afghan male psyche is used to control of its women and anything that might conceivably be perceived to threaten that is a speedy route to alienation.”

Pragmatism

“However, you have to walk

the fine line between help and encouraging a dependency culture which ultimately stifles initiative.”

“The military tends to be driven by pragmatism and achieving results so we are particularly able to accept things for what they really are and determine what’s achievable. We have to develop human capacity which at the very least means mentoring Afghans in effective and honest governance.”

ORGANISATION DETAILS

RAF

www.raf.mod.uk

MUST READ

“Military training is all about pragmatism, about finding the best solutions to a huge range of issues under a huge variety of circumstances. If you can think tactically you can probably find your way round civilian issues as well because it really is the application of good logical thought processes, common sense and judgment coupled with a willingness to accept a rather different pace to what you are accustomed to within the military.”

INSIGHT ON PEACEBUILDING

ALLA SKVORTOVA



ALLA SKVORTOVA
Head of Moldova Country Office, DfID

“It’s important to remember that there are no two similar conflicts in the world, therefore any work that just borrows an approach from elsewhere stands a high risk of failure.”

In 1991, the Eastern regions of Moldova called Transnistria declared independence from Moldova and sporadic violent clashes between Moldovan police and Transnistrian militia led to a short war in June 1992. Transnistria developed all the State attributes – the President, Parliament, Government, border and customs services, army, banking system, currency, and flag. A ceasefire agreement, and negotiations mediated by Russia, Ukraine, OSCE, EU and the USA failed to achieve any results, and the conflict is still “frozen”.

In 2003, the UK Government started a conflict resolution

programme managed jointly by DfID and FCO. Civil society organisations offered the only way to work on both sides of the river, in the absence of contacts between public administration bodies from the both sides. Alla Skvortova explains:

Bridging the river

“Although at a personal level, contacts between people from either side of the river remain strong, based on kinship - families live on both sides - friendship, and business, there are no official contacts. Even informal contacts are discouraged by politicians. There is no religious or ethnic

MOLDOVA

The Transnistrian conflict started during the break-up of the Soviet Union and Moldova’s move to independence which sparked fears among the Russian speaking population on one side of the River Nistru of the possible unification of Moldova with Romania and the introduction of Romanian as the official language.



hatred but the political and cultural differences are growing. We were looking for organisations that already had working contacts in Transnistria and we wanted to screen out politically biased organisations that didn’t follow the principle of tolerance, were known to have used hate language, or were unwilling to acknowledge the need for concessions towards the opposite side.”

“Moldova is a small country, and information is shared freely. We already knew about Moldovan and Transnistrian NGOs through the UK Small Grants Programme managed by DfID. This gave us a good insight into the whole

range of their work and by going to NGO events, talking to other donors who’d worked with civil society organisations we were able to make a judgement about who to work with.”

Crossing the lines

Skvortova’s organisation was working with journalists, against a backdrop of a media industry used to sticking to the “official” line, which meant that the conflict was only discussed publicly from two rigid government positions.

“We were aiming in the first instance to train journalists in investigative reporting and

conflict sensitive journalism. We had interns from Transnistria working in Moldova for 2-3 weeks, in both radio and print and we put journalists from the two sides together in small groups, who jointly authored stories and multimedia pieces.”

However, working with local public administration bodies proved almost impossible largely due to the fact that the organisation that put forward the programme, which was quite experienced, proved unable to

deliver it, and this element of the programme had to be closed. But, Skvortova believes that positive results in other areas meant more donors were encouraged to fund and she says, the lessons from Moldova are clear.

ORGANISATION DETAILS
Department for International Development
www.dfid.gov.uk

MUST READ

“To establish clear rules of work, to jointly agree on the targets and milestones and to establish an effective monitoring mechanism. It’s important to remember that there are no two similar conflicts in the world, therefore any work that just borrows an approach from elsewhere stands a high risk of failure. Lessons learned from elsewhere should be adjusted to the particular situation.”

INSIGHT ON PEACEBUILDING

MAUD ROURE



MAUD ROURE
Interpeace

“...it takes time to find the right organisation and to build the trust that is necessary for good collaboration. Part of the partnership building is also strengthening the partner organisation’s capacities.”

BURUNDI

Interpeace had been working in Rwanda on a dialogue and research programme for three years when in 2004, the Burundian Ambassador asked them to start a similar programme in Burundi. After the 2005 elections in Burundi they started looking for a partner organisation.



The essence of the programme was to work with civil society organisations to build trust and collaboration within Burundian society, and help people identify and find solutions to problems standing in the way of peace.

Open minds

Maud Roure says Interpeace had an open mind about who to work with as long as they had the same approach and goals as Interpeace, were neutral and seen as such and had “convening power” from top

“IT CAN BE DIFFICULT DEALING WITH ORGANISATIONS THAT AREN'T CHOSEN”

to bottom of society. Interpeace is an unusual organisation, in that it can either work as an NGO or as a UN organisation. In this case they chose the former.

“It took about a year to find the Centre for Alert and Conflict Prevention (CENAP), our eventual partner. Our search involved trying to meet as many people as possible – Burundian authorities, donors, civil society organisations and others – both in the capital and outside it. Once we’d identified a shortlist, we sought views on their capability from people who knew them.”

But, says Roure, Interpeace was mindful of sensitivities while searching for a suitable partner.

“It can be difficult to deal with organisations that aren’t chosen, so we were careful not to focus explicitly on our search for a partner when we met local organisations. Some of those not chosen have nevertheless played a valuable role in the programme.”

CENAP was established in 2002 and initially focused on strengthening the role of media in conflict prevention but evolved to conflict resolution relating to demobilisation and land issues.

Checking lists

“We read their reports analysing the political situation, and thought they were very balanced and straightforward. We also spoke to their donors and another international organisation they were working with. CENAP was small – only 5 permanent staff – but there was a good fit because they were already doing dialogue work and research.”

CENAP and Interpeace carried out a mapping phase, holding consultations across the country, at different levels, about obstacles to peace. The results were presented to a ‘national group’ made up of 200 people from government, civil society and universities as well as representatives of the local groups consulted.

This group prioritised 4 out of 15 peacebuilding challenges :

- Disarmament of civilian population
- Transitional justice
- Unemployment
- The Presidential elections

The CENAP team then began to work with four groups, one for each priority, tasked with finding and testing possible solutions with a wider audience, in the hope of

finding proposals that would be acceptable to the majority of the people of Burundi.

Success

Roure says Interpeace was fortunate to find such a genuinely impartial and established organisation as CENAP:

“This is especially difficult in post-conflict contexts where the crisis has often polarised society. For example in Rwanda (2000 – 2001) we did not manage to

“IT TAKES TIME TO FIND THE RIGHT ORGANISATION AND TO BUILD TRUST THAT IS NECESSARY FOR GOOD COLLABORATION.”

find an organisation that was seen as neutral. There we adopted a different approach, identifying individuals who were interested and open, who then, over the next two years, formed a new NGO with whom we are still partnering.”

ORGANISATION DETAILS

Interpeace

www.interpeace.org

MUST READ

“It takes time to find the right organisation and to build the trust that is necessary for good collaboration. Part of the partnership building is also strengthening the partner organisation’s capacities. In this case, for example, we helped them set up financial systems, policies, and training.”

“For Interpeace, the Board of the chosen partner is very important – to provide political protection, and access as the programme is quite politically sensitive. CENAP’s Board had a more traditional role and did not play much of a political protection role. Our first idea was to enlarge the Board with 2-3 additional members, but as an outside organisation we weren’t in an easy position vis-à-vis the Board members who were effectively the organisation’s founders. In the end, we left the Board as it was, and created an informal network to fulfil the same purpose.”

INSIGHT ON PEACEBUILDING

ROXANNE MYERS



ROXANNE MYERS

Independent Consultant

“...it created a sense of alternatives to violence at the time of the 2006 elections – people were inundated with peace messages from every direction. The elections were the first in living memory to take place without violence.”

GUYANA

Guyana was facing elections in 2006 against a backdrop of political stalemate. A political system built on ethnic lines, ongoing conflict between two ethnic groups – those of African descent and those of East Indian descent - and entrenched stereotyping were rife.



In Guyana attempts to develop either a single cross party national identity, or multiple identities had failed. The opposition was boycotting parliament, there were widespread street protests and a real fear that Guyana was becoming a failed state.

Almost 2 years before the elections, the Governance and Democracy programme of UNDP had initiated a project in which

“BOTH THE INTERNATIONAL DONORS AND GENERAL PUBLIC WERE FRUSTRATED WITH LACK OF PROGRESS.”

donors pooled resources to enable the UN to manage a single conflict resolution/violence prevention programme, aimed at ensuring peaceful elections, allowing all groups to feel included in national decision making and their community development and to start to feel there was a common shared future for the whole country.

Growing frustration

Myers says that although the UN had gone through the processes, very little had been achieved:

“The UN held widespread consultations, with the university, trades unions, media, business sector, youth and womens’ associations, religious leaders and human rights activists who identified the main problems and proposed solutions. There was support for the ongoing political dialogue process... however, after eighteen months there had been very limited success, and both the international donors and general public were frustrated with lack of progress and the rising violence levels.”

The UNDP decided to recalibrate the approach to focus on youth and youth violence but to do this they needed to involve civil society

more broadly which they did with a threefold strategy:

- Recognising that there was almost no local capacity in mediation skills in Guyana, they identified key people across all organisations who had a personal interest in conflict resolution and conflict transformation including trades unions, faith communities, NGOs, and local government ministries. They were invited to conflict resolution and transformation training and some of them went on to train others in their own organisations.

- Local governments were asked to identify young people in their communities who had leadership potential, who would reach out to their peers involved in violence, and engage with them using the skills they had learned in conflict resolution and transformation. The group represented different ethnic groups and included both men and women.

- NGOs were invited to tender through adverts in the local newspapers to support the young people in their work at community level. Organisations were assessed and selected based on their past experience and capacity and were offered UN training. It was an ambitious project and

while the young people were able to engage some of their ‘harder to reach’ contemporaries in communities that were experiencing less conflict, in some of the most conflict prone communities it was more difficult.

Hard to reach

“The programme was a wide ranging attempt to introduce conflict resolution skills across the

“THE ELECTIONS WERE THE FIRST IN LIVING MEMORY TO TAKE PLACE WITHOUT VIOLENCE.”

whole society to create a ‘critical mass’ of people who believed peace was possible. Even though some of the most ‘hard to reach’ were left out of the project, enough of the public were involved to overcome the remaining spoilers and make the project successful. More specifically, it created a sense of alternatives to violence at the time of the 2006 elections – people were inundated with peace messages from every direction. The elections were the first in living memory to take place without

violence and the peacebuilding initiative will always be seen as having contributed to this.”

Changing language

“While not all politicians acknowledged the impact of the peacebuilding movement, there has been a change in their rhetoric that includes language such as “social cohesion, inclusion, unity and change,” a marked departure from the divisive discourse of the past.”

MUST READ

“It inspired us to hope, to keep dreams alive for a more peaceful country. But if we did it again we would want to put more emphasis on justice and reconciliation. For example, there had been mayhem in the period 2002-2004, with police killing women and children, Indians being targeted and their houses burned down. Because the courts were so clogged up, people weren’t able to have recourse to the justice system, and now in some cases it is too late to gather the evidence needed to bring forward cases.”

INSIGHT ON PEACEBUILDING

LIDIJA SKARO



LIDIJA SKARO

International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP)

“For organisations coming from the outside, the most important thing is to try to respond to the needs expressed by grass roots local organisations, and enable these to actually shape their strategy. If we don’t seek to understand and address local needs, we will certainly fail.”

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

ICMP was set up in 1996 in order to address the problem of missing persons following the conflict in Bosnia, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro. Since then its mandate has expanded to cover Kosovo and Macedonia and the 40,000 estimated missing persons in 1996 have been reduced to 17,000.



Rolf Ekeus, ICMP Commissioner and OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, states “The issue of persons missing from armed conflicts, from abuses of human rights and from other crimes against humanity is a global concern, and ICMP is the only organisation in the world that specifically addresses the complexities of this problem on a political, human rights and technical level.”

The ICMP believes family associations are vital in helping to get to the truth about missing persons, and thus, treats them as equal partners with government.

Burdens of war

Lidija Skaro says, “The members of family associations, mainly women, are brought together by the burdens they still carry from the war, and their day to day struggles. Many lost sons or husbands, and are forced into the position of heads of families and wage earners. But even in these difficult circumstances, they have come together to discover the truth. First off, the family association office is a safe place to come, a place for a cup of tea and a shoulder to cry on when things get overwhelming. It’s a place that makes it easy for them to share

their experiences, and that helps ICMP. But we have also educated them on more technical things, for example explaining what DNA analysis is. They have taken on much of the role of explaining to often suspicious relatives why they need to give blood samples for matching – and this has really helped to speed up ICMP’s work.”

“Sometimes also they have helped to identify the sites of mass graves. It’s a strange thing – when people return to their homes, there are three syndromes between them and neighbours of a different ethnic group. One is denial that anything happened. Another is deliberate turning their back on the past. But there is a third, where people start to share their memories of what happened, and this can be very fruitful and provide useful information to relevant authorities.”

Raising awareness

ICMP has actively encouraged public involvement and civil society initiatives and has established cooperation with an extensive regional network of more than 100 Associations of Missing Persons. ICMP also works with other war victims-survivors groups such as civilian victims, and former combatants.

Now, ICMP is looking to involve new members of civil society such as universities, journalists, artists and human rights NGOs to ensure that the work over the last decade and the issue of missing remains is sustained.

“What is more of an issue is getting the people we work with, to work together.”

Kid gloves

In order to promote understanding and encourage greater cooperation between different religious/national groups on common advocacy issues, ICMP launched a pilot initiative and organised the “Paths to Reconciliation”, conference in 2003 which aimed to create space for discussion, truth seeking, justice and reconciliation through a series of round tables. A second project, “Victims as Survivors: Dealing with the Past and Present”, was for family associations to discuss very sensitive issues, such as atrocities and disappearance of their beloved ones.

Skaro explains that the process has to be handled sensitively, “Topics of identity, prejudice, conflict, communication and dialogue are addressed through a series of workshops, first by organising

“WHAT IS MORE OF AN ISSUE IS GETTING THE PEOPLE WE WORK WITH, TO WORK TOGETHER.”

groups of the same ethnicity, but then the next phase involved mixed groups, to help people understand that all have common goals and problems.”

Project grants have been made to family associations, as well as training and technical assistance. One of the priorities has been to encourage networking, specifically to engage family associations in effective regional multi-national mechanisms that address the specific rights and needs of family members with missing relatives. ICMP has also been active in raising public awareness so as to improve understanding of the issue of missing persons and the situation of surviving family members.

Since 2005, there is a fifteen member Regional Co-Ordination Board, representing the networks of family associations from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Croatia and Serbia.

“Six years ago, I could not have imagined that a family member of one ethnic group would go to his President and represent the experiences of all three communities.”

This group is working to persuade the EU not to allow accession until the missing persons issue has been resolved and to turn the issue of missing persons from a political cause to one of human rights.

ORGANISATION DETAILS
International Commission
on Missing Persons
www.ic-mp.org

MUST READ

“The family associations see the elite NGOs effectively making money for themselves out of the missing persons issue. The NGOs see the family associations as disorganised and unreliable. So what we have done, is to encourage them to work together as advocates for missing persons, with academics, journalists and artists. That way they can each see that the other has something to bring to the project.”

INSIGHT ON PEACEBUILDING

SERENA RIX



SERENA RIX,
Search for Common Ground

“You form a partnership when together you can do more than you could both do alone.”

NEPAL

Around 2003 Search for Common Ground (SCFG), an international NGO which deals in conflict resolution, was approached by the Antenna Foundation Nepal who wanted help training people in radio broadcasting and production for peacebuilding. It was a time when the media were under pressure and censorship from the King of Nepal.



SFCG co-designed and implemented a full training project with the Antenna Foundation which has led to working with 15 local FM radio stations in Nepal. Serena Rix takes up the story:

“What was important to us was to find a partner organisation that was capable, neutral and had a good reputation in Nepal. It was clear that Antenna (AFN) was the best partner for national radio work...it was a time when the media were under pressure and censorship from the King of Nepal.”

Local partners

In Nepal, the government insists that all implementation of projects is done through local partners. “This has both pros and cons for us. The advantages are that it is more sustainable, because you are building the capacity of local organisations. Also by combining with them, we can achieve more together than we would be able to do on our own. On the downside, it is much harder, because Search is mission driven so we have to find organisations where the mission matches our own – where the local partner doesn’t just carry out the particular activities we are interested in, but does it in the same mould as Search.”

Get your act together

The partnership with Antenna has been a great success, extending the original project to include 22 partners and working with 15 local FM stations, who take the national programming and produce local versions of it. “You really have to get your act together in terms of finance and administration. 22 partners puts a huge administrative burden on our organisation, and you have to be prepared for that.”

The real success, says Rix, is that Antenna don’t need SFCG so much “now we’ve been working with them for three years ... it’s clear that they’re very adept at creating peacebuilding programming, and don’t need much input from us anymore, which enables us to focus on new partners. There is a real sense of joy in finding that we are no longer needed by a partner, and also it’s good to feel that if we ran out of funding, we would leave behind a legacy of peacebuilding expertise in the country.”

True or false

But, she says, once funding for peacebuilding became available in Nepal, some organisations simply

added it as a “bolt on.” “So we try to assess whether they are really interested in peacebuilding, or whether it’s just ‘pasted on.’ We might find a more

genuine interest in an organisation whose core field is something else – for example, youth empowerment or human rights – and we would go with them, as



LAUNCH OF PARTNERSHIP CHILDREN'S RADIO PROGRAMME.

“THERE IS A REAL SENSE OF JOY IN FINDING THAT WE ARE NO LONGER NEEDED BY A PARTNER.”

long as we felt their mission was aligned to ours.”

ORGANISATION DETAILS
Search for Common Ground
www.sfcg.org

MUST READ

“When we start to look for partners in a new area we’ll usually have local field staff in the area so they already have a good idea of who’s around. We then develop the criteria for the sort of organisation we’re looking for, the field staff identify potential partners, get documentation from them, and talk to others about their reputation.”

“At first we resisted the idea of doing everything through partners, because we really wanted more control. But now our principle is you form a partnership when together you can do more than you could both do alone. Overall, it must be a two way learning process. We learn from our partners and they learn from us, and together we work towards the same goal of transforming conflict in Nepal.”

INSIGHT ON PEACEBUILDING

INSIGHT ON CONFLICT

Insight on Conflict (www.insightonconflict.org) maps local peacebuilding initiatives in selected conflict areas. It gives background to the conflict, main parties involved and a brief conflict analysis as well as showing:

- organisations working in particular areas
- organisations working on specific causes of conflict
- what organisations have learned from their work

The information is gathered by local researchers selected and trained by Peace Direct. Insight on Conflict displays the variety of work that local people initiate, which ranges from reintegrating women ex-combatants, training volunteers as local human rights monitors and mediators, and setting up inter-ethnic youth football teams (‘when everything else has failed, try sport!’).

Insight on Conflict is a resource aimed at development agencies, multilateral organisations, journalists, academics, mediation teams, or the military – anyone in fact who’s seeking genuine local peacebuilders. It’s also a starting point for a network of people who are wrestling with the same problems, to share information and ideas. If Insight on Peacebuilding is the ‘how’ of partnership, Insight on Conflict goes some way to answer the question of ‘who?’

We are grateful to the Fetzer Institute for their generous support which will enable Insight on Conflict to expand and become an increasingly useful tool for all those interested in local peacebuilding.



www.insightonconflict.org



www.peacedirect.org



“THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF WHAT YOU CAN DO IS WHAT YOU CAN DO WITH OTHERS. IF EVERYTHING IS CONNECTED TO EVERYTHING THEN THE THINGS THAT REALLY MATTER ARE THE INTERCONNECTORS.”

**Paddy Ashdown, Global Strategy Forum, London,
March 2009**

www.peacedirect.org
ISBN-10-09552419-1-X