Private Peacemaking

USIP-Assisted Peacemaking Projects of Nonprofit Organizations

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United States Institute of Peace

Contents

Introduction

Through its grantmaking program, the United States Institute of Peace supports activities which develop new approaches to conflict management and peacemaking. While many grants support research or training, a growing number assist nonprofit organizations in making a more direct contribution to the resolution or management of a particular conflict. This edition of Peaceworks illustrates the kinds of grants the Institute has made for peacemaking and, more importantly, extracts from them more widely applicable insights and lessons.

The peacemaking activities described here have been targeted on conflicts in East Timor, the Middle East, Georgia and South Ossetia, the Transcaucasus, Sri Lanka, Northern Ireland, Algeria, Kosovo, and Bosnia. The forms include Track II diplomacy, training as peacemaking, use of the media for peacemaking, economic development for peacemaking, and interaction programs for young people in conflict situations. Many of these projects have been successful in advancing peace and represent an impressive return on the Institute's financial investments.

These projects have generally been pathbreaking in that new techniques and approaches to peacemaking have been employed. Several have generated valuable experiences with wide application, dramatically demonstrating how effective private organizations can be in promoting peace. Both their successes and the obstacles they have encountered are broadly instructive.

What makes this publication particularly timely is the fact that private peacemaking has assumed much greater importance in the post–Cold War era. The central role of unofficial peacemakers in bringing about the Oslo Accords and peace in Mozambique illustrates how effective some private initiatives can be. But the many failed efforts are equally valuable in pointing up the complexity of all kinds of peacemaking and of private peacemaking in particular.

Lessons Learned

◗ As discovered in the projects in Georgia and South Ossetia and in Kosovo, the unofficial character of private peacemaking can permit more open and creative brainstorming which in turn may generate new ideas for settlement. This approach often provides opportunities for participants to devise new negotiating options, including ideas that may be too bold or sensitive to be suggested in a Track I setting.

◗ The projects relating to Algeria and East Timor demonstrate that unofficial dialogue can provide rare opportunities for political opponents to meet. The private character of the initiative often avoids the political complications that an official process necessarily creates. Private facilitators usually do not carry the same baggage of needs and interests as official parties, and informal opportunities for face-to-face interaction may not be possible in official processes. The interaction permitted in

private settings helps overcome the isolation characteristic of official negotiations and provides opportunities to build trust among adversaries.

◗ The East Timor project shows how moderates, often marginalized in a conflict situation, can be brought back into the peacemaking process through rebuilding the "negotiating middle." In turn, the moderates may be able to formulate a negotiating position that provides some common ground between those in conflict.

◗ The projects on Georgia and South Ossetia reveal that Track II diplomacy is usually most effective when it is linked to official processes and channels. It is important that good communication be sustained, and information regularly exchanged, with those responsible for managing official negotiation processes, as well as with other key international actors.

◗ The Sri Lanka project shows that a great deal of preparation is required to develop the necessary contacts and to generate the requisite respect and goodwill toward the host organization and the private facilitation process. Considerable effort is also required to identify the most appropriate participants.

◗ All these projects, particularly the two in Bosnia, show that, despite the difficulty, private peacemakers must seek to achieve and maintain balance and even-handedness and avoid advocating for a party or perspective.

◗ It became apparent in all these projects that private peacemakers must maintain a wide network of contacts, both to keep current with developments and to enhance their credibility. Such contacts include opinion-leaders on all sides of the conflict, academic experts, and government officials, as well as UN staff who have responsibility for official diplomacy relating to these conflicts.

◗ The Roman Catholic community of St. Egidio has concluded from its various peacemaking efforts, including those focused on Algeria and Kosovo, that each new phase of an emerging political process and of a peacemaking process requires inventiveness and creativity, as well as careful discretion and confidentiality. Their experience has also taught them how important it is for private peacemakers to have adequate resources to sustain their involvement. In addition to financial support, these resources include language skills, a supportive logistical environment, and communication capabilities.

◗ The East Timor project exploited the opportunity offered by unofficial processes to reinforce the position of political moderates and to develop moderate negotiating options.

◗ As became apparent in the Northern Ireland project, private peacemakers need to be fully familiar with the history of the conflict and the range of issues it entails. They also need to be sensitive to the potential risks and threats to those invited to participate. The unofficial process could undermine the political futures of those involved in the dialogue. The organizers also need to be alert to ways in which the official parties might manipulate and coopt the unofficial process.

◗ The Northern Ireland project and the Seeds of Peace program discovered that unofficial processes generally need to be located in neutral settings and sometimes in a neutral country.

◗ Both the Middle East projects and the Northern Ireland project build on the premise that private peacemaking should attempt to humanize the opposition, to help the participants feel comfortable with their adversaries, and to understand the positions of opposing sides. The most effective dialogue often occurs when each side forcefully advocates its positions and then listens to the other.

◗ The Search for Common Ground project in Bosnia has demonstrated how effectively radio and television can be used in a problem-solving and tension-reducing fashion to address divisive issues in a tense environment.

◗ As shown by the development project in Bosnia, it is sometimes more effective to seek interethnic accommodation as a by-product of another project, rather than as the principal and explicit objective of an initiative. Local civil organizations can become crucibles for interethnic civic participation. But they need to avoid being coopted and becoming instruments of national and international agendas.

◗ The Bosnia development project also showed that private local initiatives to promote interaction and dialogue are often more effective than top-down, politically-inspired approaches by official international actors. Large governmental approaches which are not tailored for conditions in local communities very often fail. Smaller NGO projects that are carefully adapted and targeted are often more successful.

◗ All of these projects have reminded those involved of the usefulness of the truism that participants must be thoroughly prepared and trained.

◗ It became evident in projects like those relating to Bosnia and Northern Ireland that the impact of private peacemaking is generally indirect, and may make only a limited contribution to peace. In addition, it is often difficult to measure what, if any, advances have occurred. Moreover, compared to official peacemaking, private peacemaking usually suffers from insufficient funding and limited human resources. And the best-laid plans to launch unofficial dialogue can be undermined by actions taken by the official parties in conflict.

Part I: Track II Diplomacy

Chapter 1

East Timor

by
Michael Salla

According to Louise Diamond and John MacDonald of the Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy, there are nine forms or "tracks" of intervention in conflict.[1] The first involves official or governmental intervention, while the other eight involve nongovernmental, non-official intervention. Among the eight tracks of non-state intervention is "peacemaking through professional conflict resolution"—what is more generally known as second track or Track II diplomacy. A distinctive feature of second track diplomacy is that academics, nongovernmental organizations, or individuals organize "analytical" or "interactive" problem-solving workshops with two or more parties to a conflict in order to bring about conflict resolution.

Herbert Kelman, the originator of problem-solving workshops, argues that they have two purposes. They are designed first to produce changes in the way workshop participants see themselves, see the conflict, and see any solution, and second, to enhance the likelihood that new perspectives generated will be fed back into the political debate and the decision-making process within the communities involved.[2]

These two purposes lead to a distinction between "problem-solving" and "process-promoting" workshops—the former attempts to have a direct effect on the dynamics of a conflict by influencing key decisionmakers, while the latter is more indirect, seeking to bring about changes in public perception in ways that ultimately affect decisionmakers. A further distinction of problem-solving workshops is that third parties can introduce concepts, techniques, and skills to the conflicting parties either to facilitate changes in their perceptions of one another (consultation or prenegotiation) or to assist them in negotiations over substantive political issues (mediation).

Additionally, it is not often clearly understood that Track II diplomacy may also be aimed, at least initially, at working with only one party to a conflict, in an effort to introduce the concepts and skills which might lead to a breakthrough in negotiations.

Eileen Babbitt of the Fletcher School of Diplomacy at Tufts University is among the few who have begun the needed analysis of these "training workshops."[3] In particular, says Babbitt, further research is needed on the usefulness of facilitating group cohesiveness among individuals marginalized by members of their own ethnic or religious groups in order to break negotiation impasses. Once groups have achieved cohesiveness and confidence, one can proceed to Kelman's next step of building coalitions among political moderates across conflict lines. There is consequently a need to broaden the concept of

second track diplomacy to include efforts that begin with attention only to one facet of a conflict.

The Marginalization Process in Intractable Conflicts

Conflicts become polarized when those who take intermediate or moderate positions are marginalized or excluded. This typically occurs when political violence becomes so widespread as either to discredit those who hold intermediate political positions or make them targets of violence from more extreme factions of their own ethnic or religious group who view them as traitors or collaborators. Ultimately, polarization results in a victim mentality which characterizes other parties as the oppressor. According to the "dual concern model" advocated by Jeffrey Rubin and Dean Pruitt, such attitudes lead to a party's viewing the other in ways which preclude cooperation or "problem-solving," fostering instead competition or "contending."[4] Consequently, marginalization of the "negotiating middle" for one or more of the conflicting parties proves a recipe for stalled negotiations and intractable conflict.

In intractable conflicts it is extremely difficult for marginalized individuals to form a coherent political group. Moreover, moderates are often driven into exile, intimidated into political silence, or even murdered by members of their own ethnic groups, as we have seen in Sri Lanka, Lebanon, the former Yugoslavia, and Kashmir.

One means of breaking the negotiation impasse in intractable conflicts is to assist individuals who have suffered from marginalization to gain political cohesion as a group and to understand their strategic significance in the negotiation process.

Rebuilding the "Negotiating Middle" in East Timor

A July 1997 workshop organized by the author and funded by the U.S. Institute of Peace attempted to facilitate group cohesion among marginalized East Timorese. The workshop, held at American University in Washington, D.C., involved individuals who fall into the "negotiating middle" between those who advocate a self-determination process that might result in independence, and those who argue that East Timor already enjoys sufficient political autonomy as one of Indonesia's twenty-seven provinces, a position consistent with Indonesian government policy.

East Timorese who fall into the "negotiating middle" have been excluded as their fate and that of the wider East Timorese community is decided by others—the Indonesian and Portuguese governments negotiating under United Nations auspices, and expatriate East Timorese political organizations skillful at lobbying foreign governments, multilateral organizations, and NGOs. The Indonesian government policy of intimidating or repressing those who do not accept the official government position has contributed further to their isolation. This extends also to the recent winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, Bishop Carlos Belo, who has publicly taken an intermediate position and has as a consequence had to weather various forms of criticism and repression by security forces, as well as having twice reportedly been a target of assassination attempts. The treatment given to such high-profile individuals as Bishop Belo makes it extremely difficult for others in the middle to take a public position over the stalled negotiations. Consequently, they have lacked the confidence to form a cohesive group that could discuss and lobby on

behalf of the political principles they share. An irony of the East Timor conflict, then, is that individuals who still live there and are most likely to suffer from the conflict have been excluded from the negotiations which affect them most directly. They are widely perceived by governments, NGOs, and expatriate political organizations as stooges for Indonesian government positions or as too intimidated to speak their own minds, so external actors have found themselves with fewer options in terms of who to involve in multi-track efforts to resolve the conflict.

The chief aim of the Washington workshop was to bring together a number of East Timorese in the middle to assist them in gaining group cohesion and in appreciating the group's strategic significance in the stalled negotiating process. At the end of the workshop, the individuals commented on how they had been marginalized thus far and felt that the workshop outcome—a jointly drafted document—had given them a sense of strategic significance. The group that emerged from the workshop wished to play a more prominent role in settling the conflict than that previously allowed them by their expatriate peers and foreign governments and NGOs. Focusing on a power-sharing arrangement that would straddle the positions of both the Indonesian government and of expatriate East Timorese, the workshop participants drafted a confidential plan they believe meets the core needs of the Indonesian government and the East Timorese community for both security and self-government.

Through problem-solving exercises executed in the framework of future powersharing, the group came to have a greater appreciation of its own capacity to make a serious contribution to the negotiation process.

The workshop did this through three types of sessions. The first consisted of formal presentations by experts on different models of power-sharing and problems associated with each. The second involved more informal roundtable discussions which addressed the applicability of the concepts and models that had been introduced. This type of session was very useful as it allowed diplomatic "observers" to participate in a way which maintained confidentiality. These sessions were facilitated in the fashion of a problem-solving workshop, with more emphasis on encouraging dialogue and problem-solving than on information sharing.

The third type of session, caucuses involving only East Timorese participants, was the most critical for inspiring cohesion among them. In the caucuses, East Timorese participants could privately and confidentially discuss issues and draft documents. They developed more confidence in themselves as a group, and were prepared to advocate on behalf of a jointly-drafted document that might have been too politically hazardous for an individual to support.

The East Timorese felt that they needed a further workshop among themselves before they were ready to include Indonesians and expatriate East Timorese in a workshop oriented toward substantive problem-solving. Rebuilding the "negotiating middle" is not achieved by a single transformative event, but requires a process involving a number of meetings and events.

The East Timor workshop fell into neither of the two main categories of Track II diplomacy as it is usually understood. It involved neither perceptual change between protagonists nor substantive problem solving involving parties to the conflict. Only a faction

from one side of the conflict was represented—the "negotiating middle"–rather than two or more parties in the conflict. Nor does the process adopted in the East Timor workshop fit into any of the other six non-official tracks of diplomacy outlined by Diamond and MacDonald. The concept of Track II diplomacy would benefit from a wider understanding of the importance of facilitating and nurturing cohesiveness among marginalized individuals involved in an intractable conflict.

It is also helpful to recognize that academic and NGO efforts aimed at facilitating strategic group cohesiveness are part of a third category of Track II diplomacy. Babbitt's description of training workshops comes closest to describing what occurred at the East Timor workshop, if "training workshops" are understood as a third category of Track II diplomacy involving external parties in efforts to work with members from one party in a conflict, either to promote better negotiating strategies or to help consolidate group cohesion as a prelude to problem-solving or process-promoting workshops.

Problems in Rebuilding the "Negotiating Middle"

Creating a group from individuals who have in common only their intermediate position between parties in an intractable conflict requires a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics and history of the conflict. The political and/or violent processes that culminated in the middle's being marginalized must be carefully assessed in terms of possible threats to any group that takes an intermediate position. Is the emergence of the "negotiating middle" likely to result in physical threats to members of the group, their families, or supporters?

Second, is the emergence of a negotiating middle likely to prove beneficial in helping break an impasse in negotiations? Will it only foster division and friction among the wider community without affecting the dominant negotiating position, or will it facilitate a more flexible bargaining position?

A third critical question for external actors is whether to invest resources and time to help marginalized individuals attain strategic group cohesiveness in a way that might unnecessarily compromise fundamental positions. In the case of East Timor, expatriate East Timorese see the forces of history—democratization and human rights—on their side, and are tempted to view compromise as unnecessary and unacceptable.

Fourth, will the formation of an intermediate group merely allow state authorities to manipulate it in order to entrench their own position and to weaken international support for the state's principal political opponents, in this case expatriate East Timorese organizations? Finally, are the expectations and desires of the workshop organizer likely to lead to such feelings of obligation that participants feel pressured to adopt positions they might on reflection find untenable?

Wider Applicability

A training workshop designed to rebuild the negotiating middle must carefully consider who ought to participate, since parties entrenched at either end of the negotiating spectrum have an interest in dismissing the group's strategic significance. This is clearly the

case in East Timor, where the conflict has lasted over twenty years with little change in the protagonists' primary positions. A group of East Timorese representing the negotiating middle might prove indispensable in the negotiating process by offering alternatives which break the impasse without causing the other parties to lose face. This has already been hinted at in the East Timor workshop where a negotiation position produced by the participants has been favorably received by most other actors in the conflict.

Chapter 2

Georgian-Ossetian Joint Brainstorming

by
Keith Fitzgerald

In April 1995, Professor Roger Fisher, founder and senior advisor of the Conflict Management Group (CMG), and Keith Fitzgerald, also of CMG, traveled to the Republic of Georgia to meet with the Georgian leadership and the leadership of the breakaway region of South Ossetia. After years of civil war, the sides agreed to a cease-fire in 1992 and the situation remained frozen in the years that followed. Authorities in Takhinvali, the capital of South Ossetia, maintained *de facto* independence from Georgia while suffering years of isolation and economic stagnation. Officials in Tbilisi, capital of the newly independent former Soviet Republic of Georgia, were trying to build a state out of the ashes of their own war for independence, at the same time attempting to hold it together in the face of two civil wars–with secessionist movements in South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

When the project began, the only communication between the Georgian and Ossetian sides was in the form of partisan speeches, broadcasts, and articles, or rejected demands of one another. In the meantime, tens of thousands of refugees were unable or unwilling to return to their homes; the economic crisis continued; and the rule of law could not be relied upon.

CMG's preliminary diagnosis of the stalemate focused on a few elements of the conflict.

▶ Partisan perceptions differed greatly among Georgians and Ossetians–about the origins of the conflict, the legitimacy of each side's authority, and so on.

▶ The sides were so preoccupied with substantive issues concerning sovereignty and territorial integrity that they gave little attention to the process by which they were dealing with them.

▶ Each side had put forward demands rather than clarifying its interests.

▶ Each side saw itself as reasonable in rejecting the other's demands.

▶ There were no options being discussed which might have been acceptable to both sides.

▶ The process in place at the time was unlikely to suggest such options.

The CMG team suggested an informal, unofficial process in which a few knowledgeable and influential people from each side would meet to generate possible options which might at some future point be recommended to leaders. CMG professionals would facilitate the meetings. The process, known as "facilitated joint brainstorming," offered a number of improvements on the status quo, including the following.

◗ Influential people on both sides of the conflict would have an opportunity to meet as private persons rather than as officials, building personal relationships which would allow them to listen to each other more effectively, to speak more candidly and frequently, and to begin trusting each other.

◗ Participants could work to understand the perceptions and interests of the other side. This would allow members of one side to see how the other might see things differently without having to conclude that their own perceptions were "wrong."

◗ Any ideas developed at the session would be those of the participants. Facilitators, unlike mediators, do not propose agreements to the parties. Sessions are normally conducted with groundrules ensuring confidentiality and non-attribution. Thus there is no incentive to claim credit or place blame for any of the ideas, which are generated rather than proposed.

◗ Rather than focusing exclusively on the issues which are the subject of the conflict, participants would be encouraged to consider the process by which they might deal with any challenging issues.

◗ The sessions would include a number of lectures on negotiation theory and several skill-building exercises designed to enhance the ability of participants to deal with ongoing conflicts.

◗ Participants would be invited with the explicit understanding that they speak only for themselves, and that no commitments would be requested—or even allowed—at the meeting. Participants would also be informed that ideas were to be explored without prejudice to any existing official positions. This allows participants to explore options freely without the risk that any idea might be interpreted as a concession or a commitment.

With assurances that the session would be unofficial and without prejudice, and that no substantive commitments would be made, Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze and South Ossetian leader Ludwig Chibirov asked CMG to arrange the initial meeting. The CMG team suggested that the first meeting address practical problems, such as repairing roads and railways or restoring telecommunications, without prejudice to the issue of South Ossetia's constitutional status.

In summer 1995, CMG conducted a seminar on international mediation for the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Shortly thereafter, the Foreign Ministry agreed to provide funding for the Georgia-South Ossetia project, and CMG formed a partnership with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) regional office for the Transcaucasus in Tbilisi and with members of the Norwegian Red Cross (collectively known as "NorTeam"). The combined resources of CMG and NRC allowed the project team to maintain a permanent presence in the region, which was particularly important because of the logistical difficulties in the Caucasus and Takhinvali's near-total isolation. The partnership also combined the advice and facilitation skills of CMG with the practical assistance NRC offered to refugees and local populations in the region.

The first facilitated joint brainstorming session was held in Norway in January 1996 and was seen as a breakthrough by participants and leaders on both sides of the conflict. Influential people met for the first time, and they conceived a number of joint projects and ideas for moving forward. At the end of the session, participants requested a follow-up meeting expressly to address the difficult status question.

In May 1996, the CMG/NRC team facilitated another joint brainstorming session, also in Norway, on the status question. Participants generated ideas on the many categories of issues associated with constitutional status: division of executive, legislative, and judicial powers; human rights policies; border and security arrangements; economic and environmental policies; and so forth. They also designed a possible framework for an official bilateral negotiation process, and expressed a desire that their respective leaders meet for the first time.

The following summer saw a number of political events in the region which had direct and indirect consequences for the project. These included the Russian presidential elections; the war in Chechnya; a meeting between Shevardnadze and Chibirov; the establishment of an official Georgian-Ossetian negotiation process; and profound political changes in Takhinvali. Although some project activity occurred during this period, the next facilitated joint brainstorming session was not held until June 1997, after the bilateral delegations held their first official meetings. The session, funded by the United States Institute of Peace and the Norwegian Foreign Ministry, was designed to focus on the possibilities for economic cooperation, the issue of refugees and repatriation, and on what people on each side might do to enhance public confidence in a process for reconciliation and the possibility of a political settlement of the status question.

The Georgian-Ossetian facilitated joint brainstorming project has been successful for a number of reasons, the most striking the way in which the leadership of both sides is now approaching conflict. The partnership between CMG and the Norwegian Refugee Council has also been rewarding to both organizations in terms of mutual learning. In general, as an NGO peacemaking effort, the unofficial, informal process helped to establish an official bilateral process where it did not exist. It also helped to cultivate and prepare key individuals to take part. Now that an official process exists, the brainstorming project can be used to generate ideas which may be turned into decisions in the official process; it can help the sides set an agenda and prepare for official talks; and it can help participants overcome obstacles in the event that the official talks become deadlocked.

Challenges

The CMG/NRC team encountered a number of challenges in the course of the project. The main difficulty, of course, has lain in not having the human and financial resources to bring the parties together more frequently, or to follow up on the sessions more immediately and thoroughly. While the sessions are helpful, virtually all the participants have expressed a desire to have more, with less time elapsing between them.

There are other obstacles more directly related to the situation. Unfortunately, there are always those who benefit politically and financially from chaos and conflict. Some hard-liners on both sides, particularly in the early stages of the project, saw informal cooperation as a threat to their interests. For example, because of the stalemate and South

Ossetia's *de facto* independence, Georgia's northern border with the Russian Federation was unguarded on one side. This allowed organized criminal enterprises and local smuggling operations to flourish. If such groups feel threatened by foreign NGOs trying to help authorities–including law enforcement authorities–to cooperate, they sometimes attempt to frustrate those efforts, through intimidation, theft, political influence, etc.

Other regional actors, particularly the Russian Federation and the Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe (OSCE) have been engaged in official efforts to bring the sides together or to settle the conflict entirely. The joint brainstorming project is designed to help the parties generate useful ideas, not to make decisions, which are left to those with official authority. This is a limitation on NGO peacemaking activity, here used by design to make the brainstorming process possible. The ideas are meant to contribute to any official process, though at times it can be a challenge to coordinate such efforts–particularly when many of the participants are involved in both. Fortunately, the project team has maintained a good working relationship with the OSCE mission in Georgia, and participants routinely inform their counterparts in Moscow about the usefulness of the work done at the unofficial meetings. In addition, the project has received valuable assistance from the U.S. embassy in Tbilisi, the Georgia desk at the U.S. Department of State, the Norwegian Foreign Ministry in Oslo, and the Norwegian embassy in Moscow.

The project on Georgian-Ossetian joint brainstorming provides a useful example of how official and unofficial–governmental and nongovernmental–peacemaking activities can be combined to maximum effect. A government (in this case the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway) is joined by an independent grantmaking institution (the U.S. Institute of Peace) to support the collaborative effort of two international NGOs (CMG and NRC) to work with senior Georgian and Ossetian officials, in an unofficial, informal capacity, in order to generate ideas which in turn are used to create and later support official efforts to manage an ethnic conflict in the Transcaucasus.

Chapter 3

The St. Egidio Platform for a Peaceful Solution of the Algerian Crisis

by
Marco
Impagliazzo

Since the 1991 military coup in Algeria, violence has taken the lives of 70,000 people there. Independent observers variously explain it as due to repression by the military and security forces against the Islamist movement and its supporters; to actions by the Islamist insurgency; to intergroup violence among the different armed factions; and to banditry and communal intolerance exacerbated by competition for land and the government's distribution of arms to the civilian-organized militias. According to many, a military solution of the Algerian crisis is impossible. The army, even with the help of the militias, does not have the power to put a stop to the widespread violence that reigns in the country. A political solution to the crisis is indispensable and urgent.

The Initiative of St. Egidio

The first colloquium on Algeria was held in Rome in the headquarters of the Community of St. Egidio, a Catholic lay organization increasingly involved in international peacemaking, on November 21–22, 1994.[5] On this occasion the most influential Algerian political leaders met again after not having seen each other for long periods. In addition, more than 250 journalists from many countries attended. The colloquium provided a unique opportunity for the protagonists to speak to one another. The Community's initiative originally intended to create a table for negotiations, to offer the various Algerian leaders, representing the most important political parties, a space in which they "could present their ideas on the direction the country should take and contribute to a solution." The invitation stated, "We (the Community of St. Egidio) do not intend to create a dialogue, which should in any case be held among Algerians in Algeria, but rather a free and genuine debate in which each participant can express his or her political viewpoint." The invitation was extended to the most important social and political leaders in Algeria and to the parties that had received significant numbers of votes in the first round of the 1991 legislative elections.

After two general meetings and many bilateral talks, the idea emerged that a common statement should be prepared. On January 13, 1995 the text of the Platform was approved and signed by Abdenour Ali Yahia of the political party LADDH, Abdelhamid Mehri (FLN), Hocine Ait Ahmed and Ahmed Djeddai (FFS), Rabah Kebire and Anwar Haddam (FIS), Ahmed Ben-Bella and Kaled Bensmain (MDA), Louisa Hanoun (PT), Abdallah Jaballah (Ennahda), and Ahmed Ben Mohammed (JMC). These leaders combined represented the parties that received more than 80 percent of the votes in the 1991 elections.

The Platform of Rome

The Platform resulted from intense negotiations among the various Algerian leaders, including official representatives of FIS, FFS, and FLN. It was conceived as an offer of peace and as a framework for further negotiations with all parties to the Algerian conflict. Despite the political impasse that has prevailed since 1995, it is still the most significant offer of a peaceful settlement of the crisis.

The Platform is a declaration of principles by which the Algerian parties and leaders from all points on the political spectrum (secular, socialist, Trotskyite, democratic, and Islamist) commit themselves to a peaceful solution of the crisis. It rejects violence and embraces division of government powers, political pluralism, and freedom of religion and thought. It also affirms the need to respect international human rights norms. It provides a valuable and innovative framework for the development of understanding and accommodation between Muslim and democratic schools of political thought.

Algeria and St. Egidio

How did it happen that the Christian community of St. Egidio became involved with Muslim Algeria, especially when Islam is central to the Algerian crisis? In September 1994, during the eighth International Meeting of Prayer for Peace—which included leaders from most world religions, recalls Andrea Riccardi, the founder of St. Egidio—"some Algerian Muslim friends asked why Christians, who often create movements for the defense of human rights, remain immobile when a Muslim country is involved." Riccardi continues, "It sounded like a challenge which needed to be immediately accepted."

That year St. Egidio had been devastated by the assassinations of Father Henri Vergès and Sister Paule-Hélène Saint-Raymond, who had both worked in the diocesan library in the Casbah of Algiers and were well-known to some of the Community members. The Community had maintained strong relations with Algeria for a long time, particularly with the Algerian church. Groups from St. Egidio had visited Algeria every year since the early 1980s within the framework of interreligious encounters and exchanges among young people on both shores of the Mediterranean.

The Algerian war of liberation in the late 1950s had left its mark on the Algerian church, but thanks to the leadership of its archbishop, Cardinal Léon Etienne Duval, it was able to encourage the development of Muslim-Christian-Jewish coexistence. St. Egidio has long considered Algeria a key country in terms of Christian-Muslim relations. Close personal relationships were developed over the years between the Community and Cardinal Duval and his successor Henri Teissier, the present Archbishop of Algiers, as well as with various priests and religious from the Trappist community in the Notre Dame de l'Atlas monastery, where tragic murders occurred in May 1996.

"Appeal for Peace" and the Future of the Platform

While St. Egidio has continued to foster the same kind of dialogue that characterized the colloquium that produced the Platform, more recent initiatives have been launched inside Algeria. In October 1996 Algerian political forces supportive of dialogue wrote an

"Appeal for Peace" reflecting the principles of the Platform, signed by more than 20,000 Algerian political activists from across the political spectrum. The Platform still represents the only instance in which political leaders have come together to negotiate a comprehensive yet flexible peace proposal. The Platform was intended as a starting point for negotiation; it can still serve as a basis for the kind of political dialogue that is essential for peace.

Post-Conference Problems

The Algerian government rejected the Platform document from the outset as an interference in Algeria's internal affairs; as a plot of international forces, including the Vatican; and as an attempt to manipulate the Algerian political debate. This remains its position, despite the fact that the Platform was negotiated and signed only by Algerians and was never under any direct or indirect influence of the Vatican (whose support for the initiative has always been lukewarm). The increasing tension inside Algeria has implications for St. Egidio, whose leadership remains under death threat from Algerian sources and receives police protection from the Italian government.

Although efforts to influence the Algerian government have failed, the network of leaders created in Rome has been maintained, and the St. Egidio team that organized the two Algerian conferences facilitates an ongoing support group for Algerians.

St. Egidio recognizes that it can only have an impact on a situation if the key players are interested in its services. The Community has no coercive power, nor can it challenge the Algerian power structure. However, the simple offer of a safe space where free speech is guaranteed sometimes produces unexpected results. The Community of St. Egidio is well aware of its weakness and its inability to solve the Algerian conflict, but it tries to mobilize other forces in order to pressure the parties involved to stop the killing and violence.

Chapter 4

Community of St. Egidio in Kosovo

On September 1, 1996 the Educational Agreement for Kosovo was signed by President Slobodan Milosevic of the Republic of Serbia and by Dr. Ibrahim Rugova, the Albanian leader in Kosovo, the Serbian province with a population that is 90 percent Albanian. The agreement anticipated that the Albanian youth of Kosovo, who had not been in school for five years, would return to school. It calls for the "normalization" of the school system there and the establishment of an implementation commission of three representatives from the government and three from the Albanian community.

This was the first official agreement of any kind reached between the Serb government and the Albanian community in this century. Beyond the specific terms of the agreement, it also made a contribution toward general political accommodation, or at least it seemed to do so at the time it was signed. A variety of delays and difficulties have been encountered in the effort to implement the agreement, till the protocol of implementation was signed on March 23, 1998, after which the Albanians began to re-enter the public schools and universities.

St. Egidio facilitated the convening of the parties, as well as being a member of the commission formed to implement the agreement. The agreement expresses appreciation to St. Egidio for its contribution to the dialogue that generated it.

Since the early part of this decade, as the situation in the Balkans deteriorated, the Community of St. Egidio worked to multiply its contacts in the former Yugoslavia to promote dialogue and peace. The Community's effort had two goals—to facilitate dialogue among the religious communities engaged in the Yugoslavian war, that is, among Catholic, Orthodox, and Muslim leaders; and to work on a settlement of the conflict in Kosovo.

The first formal effort was made in 1993 through contacts in both Albania and the former Yugoslavia. Various proposals were offered, but they were not accepted by the two parties. Representatives of St. Egidio held meetings with, among others, Milosevic, Rugova, and Albanian president Sali Berisha. The discussions confirmed the large gap between the Serbian and Albanian positions regarding Kosovo. In 1992 the Albanians in Kosovo had voted in a referendum for independence. The Serb leadership was not prepared to grant legitimacy to the effort to discuss Albanian rights. Daily the gulf between the two million Albanians and the 200,000 Serbs resident in Kosovo widened.

The Albanians began to develop alternative institutions for administration, schools, hospitals, health center, and small businesses. From 1993 to 1997 there were in effect two societies in Kosovo, each ignoring the other, except for the repressive activities of the Serbian police. The Albanians opted out of the existing structures and have been living in a virtually stateless condition, with dramatic consequences for their social, economic, and

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cultural life. The Serb population, which regards Kosovan independence as non-negotiable, lying as it does at the heart of Serb culture and history, tries to avoid contact with Albanians. The Serbs in the remainder of Serbia are fully supportive of the Kosovo Serbs and consider them a line of resistance against the Islamic, primitive, and irresponsibly prolific Albanians.

During 1994 and 1995, St. Egidio's contacts with both sides showed no signs of flexibility on either. The Albanians would consider nothing short of independence. For their part, the Serbs denied that there was an ethnic problem in Kosovo; the problem was that the Albanians refused to be Serbian citizens. Despite this inflexibility, St. Egidio was able to sustain its dialogue with both sides. In addition, representatives from St. Egidio made periodic visits to Belgrade and Pristina. St. Egidio invited Albanian leaders to visit St. Egidio headquarters in Rome, and St. Egidio provided humanitarian aid (primarily medical assistance) to both Serb and Albanian populations.

In June 1995 St. Egidio detected slightly greater flexibility on both sides. The Serb leadership in Belgrade seemed to be ready to engage in a dialogue with Albanians. But it was not clear who would be prepared to engage in dialogue. Because of its good contacts and reputation for goodwill and impartiality, the Serbs accepted St. Egidio's offer of facilitation, after having rejected several other offers of international mediation, which they feared would undermine the Serb position that the Kosovo question constitutes an internal problem for the Republic of Serbia. The Serbs concluded that St. Egidio could facilitate dialogue on a private, humanitarian, and unofficial basis. For their part, the Albanians accepted St. Egidio as being fully independent of the Serbian state. Moreover, St. Egidio's involvement implied the internationalization of the Kosovo question. The direct dialogue did not commence until summer 1996, after months of negotiation between the parties.

An essential precondition to the initiation of this dialogue was the renunciation by the Albanian representatives of discussing independence. It was agreed, however, that involvement in the dialogue would not prejudice the longer-term goal of independence. St. Egidio proposed that the dialogue begin by focusing on concrete issues relating to schooling, health care, culture, newspapers, sports, police activity, and the like. Larger political and institutional questions could be considered later. The willingness of the Serb representatives to engage in this discussion implied the recognition, for the first time, of the Albanian population as a distinct community.

The implementation of the agreement proved very difficult. Several factors have contributed to this, including debate on the legitimacy of international mediation provided by St. Egidio on what the Serbs perceive to be a domestic issue; the increase in Serb nationalism and the heightening of political and military tension in the region; and the strengthening of the armed opposition and increasing militancy among the Kossovars of Albanian descent.

Immediately following the signing of the education agreement, the Serbs objected to St. Egidio's being given the chairmanship of the "3+3" commission. After two months, Milosevic realized that he had no alternative and St. Egidio was accepted in this position. But then the Albanians hardened their position, contending that the university situation

had to be settled before the high school. The Albanians object to the Serbian insistence that they integrate themselves into a Yugoslavian educational structure, while the Serbs insist that the Albanians recognize their citizenship and behave accordingly. Despite these obstacles, the 3+3 commission under St. Egidio chairmanship offers a channel for ongoing dialogue and negotiation which will continue to address these divisive issues.

Factors Contributing to St. Egidio's Effectiveness

St. Egidio's motivation for engagement is central to its effectiveness. The members of the Community of St. Egidio have a strong sense of responsibility to those in pain and suffering, especially the poor. The Community also has a profound appreciation for its own weakness. The caring attitude that St. Egidio exhibits towards the less fortunate around the world opens the opportunity for person-to-person contact. Beyond the commitment to personal relationships with those in need lies the strong conviction that peace comes through dialogue and understanding.

As a Christian foundation, St. Egidio believes that peacemaking is an essential part of its mission, requiring of it patience and commitment to long-term engagement. The work of the Community is sustained by the belief that it has nothing to lose from failure. At the same time, the Community painfully acknowledges that failure will make people who are already suffering even more vulnerable, and the most vulnerable of those are women and children, who suffer disproportionately from wars and conflict. St. Egidio positions itself at a moral distance from those in positions of privilege who often reap political advantage from the continuation of war.

St. Egidio's goals also benefit from its ability to amass and manage information about conflict situations from a wide range of sources, including an extensive network of diplomats, political figures, and other professionals from Italy and other countries. St. Egidio maintains direct, personal relationships with key actors. In addition, beyond being a nongovernmental organization, St. Egidio has no bureaucracy and is not burdened by red tape, which increases its efficiency. St. Egidio has a modest but sufficient level of human and financial resources to initiate action, and the fundraising capacity to sustain involvement. Finally, the location of the St. Egidio headquarters in a small but beautifully restored and functional convent in Rome constitutes an invaluable resource as a setting for dialogues and meetings.

The changing international political context has also contributed to St. Egidio's success. The end of the Cold War, the evolution of new dimensions to old conflicts (for example in Mozambique and Guatemala), and the emergence of new intrastate conflicts all call for new and creative forms of peacemaking. St. Egidio has discovered a growing receptiveness in the U.S. diplomatic community to new tools and modes of peacemaking, including those offered by St. Egidio. There is a greater awareness of the need for new nonstate actors on the international scene, as well as a new appreciation of the indispensability of the structures of civil society in sustaining peace. The United Nations plays new roles that change the diplomatic landscape. There is also less hesitance to allow religiously-motivated organizations to engage in peacemaking. St. Egidio also benefits from the new roles open to medium-sized countries, like Italy, in international affairs. The

growing popularity of Track II diplomacy and of conflict resolution reinforces the potential utility of St. Egidio's approach. St. Egidio also understands and productively exploits the link between humanitarian assistance and political processes.

St. Egidio believes that because every conflict situation is unique, new approaches must be adopted for each new intervention. Nevertheless, it has found elements common to all effective peacemaking:

◗ the readiness of all the parties to be in contact with each other;

◗ the identification of credible facilitators or mediators;

◗ a flexible approach in the dialogue and negotiating sessions;

◗ the maintenance of relationships and communication channels with all the key actors in the international community;

◗ the preservation of discretion and confidentiality; and

◗ the acquisition of adequate resources to sustain involvement, including language skills, a supportive logistical environment, financial resources, and communication capabilities to enable each delegation to remain in regular contact with its leaders.

Chapter 5

PICAR Sri Lanka Problem-Solving Project

Since 1994, Harvard University's Program on International Conflict Analysis and Resolution (PICAR) has been working to foster problem-solving dialogue in an unofficial effort to contribute to peace in Sri Lanka. Under the direction of Donna Hicks and William Weisberg, the Sri Lanka Project began by convening, in collaboration with the American Friends Service Committee, problem-solving workshops with expatriate Tamils, Sinhalese, and Muslims based in the United States. The workshops were designed to bring together influential members of the three communities for a discussion of their needs, fears, and concerns, and to jointly develop actions, responsive to the concerns of all sides, that would support a peace process in Sri Lanka. After their experience in the workshops, the participants concluded that PICAR should convene a workshop with participants from Sri Lanka, and subsequently set up meetings in Sri Lanka in 1995 for Hicks and Weisberg with high-ranking officials in the government, the leadership of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), and non-official leaders representing a wide variety of viewpoints on the conflict. In 1996, a problem-solving workshop was held in the United States with a group of Sinhalese and Tamils from the United States and Sri Lanka. Possible joint actions to encourage a return to government-LTTE negotiations were discussed, but could not be implemented in the face of escalating tensions between the communities back home.

With the support of a grant from the United States Institute of Peace, PICAR intended to bring together influential persons affiliated with the government and LTTE in 1997 and 1998, using the interactive problem-solving approach, for discussions designed to lay the groundwork for effective official negotiations.

Both the government and the LTTE have publicly stated conditions to be met for negotiations to resume, but it is unclear exactly how the conditions would be operationalized, what concerns underlie these conditions, and where there might be flexibility in the publicly stated positions. A joint group could seek to arrive at a solution to satisfy the basic needs and interests underlying the positions of the two parties. Non-officials would be free from the political constraints faced by official decision makers, and might discover conditions for official negotiations that would not only encourage the parties to meet, but offer them a better chance of success than the last round of talks.

It was necessary to travel a second time to Sri Lanka to meet, in person, with prospective participants. Meetings in Colombo with a variety of political and civic leaders produced an excellent participant group from the Sinhalese community.[6] After the meetings in Colombo, our intention had been to travel north to meet with the LTTE leadership to discuss the list of prospective Tamil participants but an impending military offensive meant we were refused clearance for travel into the war zone, and it was not possible to

by Donna Hicks and William Weisberg

assemble a joint group of non-officials who had the blessing of the officials from their respective sides.

The parties' disagreement on conditions for official talks have given rise to competing requirements for the types of PICAR problem-solving meetings each would endorse. The government is ambivalent, at best, toward the possibility of future negotiations with the LTTE and is currently pursuing a military campaign to weaken the Tigers and a political campaign to marginalize them. Though the leader of the opposition UNP has publicly stated that talks with the Tigers are necessary if there is to be parliamentary progress on constitutional reforms addressing ethnic tensions, Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga has stated that she would consider talking with the Tigers again only after further progress on the constitutional reforms. For their part the Tigers have been repeating their call for negotiations through an official international mediator, a condition the government has consistently resisted. Likewise, the government and the LTTE would prefer different types of problem-solving dialogue. The LTTE has insisted that high-level officials be involved, explaining that it cannot work through conduits and must speak for itself. The government has agreed to allow non-officials to participate in problem-solving dialogues, but has not responded to inquiries regarding official government participation in such a process.

Our analysis strongly suggests that significant progress toward ending the conflict can only be made through face-to-face interactive processes. Messages communicated through press statements do not help either party understand the concerns and constraints of the other in the full and vivid fashion necessary for the significant changes required to reverse protracted conflict. For strategic and other reasons, the parties have disagreed about the format, content, and participants for official talks for the past several years, even during the cessation of hostilities two years ago when official contact occurred.

The Tigers want to begin any talks with discussion of the flow of supplies to territory under their control; would like high-level officials as the negotiators; and want an international mediator present at negotiations. This is not surprising for the guerrilla army of a liberation movement seeking respect and international legitimacy. The government would like to discuss their proposed devolution of power to local regions, without international mediation, in talks attended by low-level government advisors. This follows from their view of the Tigers as the most radical element of the Tamil community, one that should not be accorded status as an equal partner to the government in negotiations. In an environment of mistrust—in which two past agreements and a more recent ceasefire have been scuttled—these strategic differences appear irreconcilable, and in the absence of interaction between the parties, any attempt to reconcile these differences backfires. During the cessation of hostilities, President Kumaratunga suddenly suggested a mediator for the talks, an apparent concession to the Tigers. But this unilateral suggestion was rejected by the Tigers because she did not consult with them and had simply named a possible French mediator whom the Tigers did not know or trust. If the president's initiative was genuine, some discussion with the Tigers prior to the announcement might have produced a breakthrough.

In the absence of trust and interaction between the parties, the government continues to wonder whether the Tigers are capable of giving up their aspiration to total independence, and the Tigers continue to question whether the government is sincere about negotiations. Without direct communication with the government, it is difficult for the Tigers to accept the government's political constraints—the pressures from the military, from the Sinhalese nationalists, or the parliamentary coalition partners. Without direct communication with the LTTE, it is difficult for the government to accept the extent to which the devolution package becomes irrelevant to the Tigers when they are not included in the process of developing it.

The first step needed would bring the parties together to break down their isolation from one another. In the absence of any prenegotiation contacts which might lay the foundations for the development of working trust, official talks could prove more harmful than helpful. Without some reason to believe that the partner with whom one is negotiating can be trusted to respect and carry out agreements, negotiations are destined not only to fail, but to exacerbate the cycle of mistrust and enmity. "Relationship-building" opportunities between the government and the LTTE could begin the development of a relationship that would sustain official negotiations when they do take place.

The agenda for the relationship-building sessions should not focus on the substantive issues that divide the parties, or the laying out of demands. One possibility would be to ask both parties to address how, in the absence of trust, a meaningful peace process could begin. The parties could identify interim steps that would provide a basis for them to conclude that there is sufficient self-interest at stake to engage in meaningful official negotiations.

To address this topic, we will gather a joint group to engage in interactive problem solving. The question of the level of participant—officials or non-officials—is not yet settled. Over the next several months, contacts with our many Sinhalese and Tamil advisors, as well as communication with the government and LTTE, will determine this matter. Though the eventual purpose is to reverse the isolation and lack of interaction on the official level, it may be necessary to work toward this goal on the non-official level. A joint group of non-officials could understand the needs, fears, concerns, interests, and constraints of the two parties sufficiently to begin to view the conflict as a joint problem, and endeavor to arrive at initiatives responsive to both communities. Our Tamil and Sinhalese advisors, who have had extensive contact with members of the other community on these issues, have suggested issues a joint group could profitably explore—for example, beginning negotiations without a cease-fire, saving the government internal pressure from those who would claim that they are allowing the Tigers to reposition while they talk, at the same time allowing the Tigers to avoid a cease-fire when they are in the disadvantageous position of having surrendered most of the Jaffna peninsula.

Rebuilding a sense of possibility for negotiations and building a relationship of working trust among non-officials could produce a thaw in the relations of officials. The ever-present and powerful influence of political and military maneuvering requires persistence in effort and flexibility in project design on the part of non-official third parties.

While our analysis continues to suggest the possible benefits of joint problem-solving among non-officials, we are ever mindful of the powerful ability of events to overtake

efforts. The military offensive and its eventual success, failure, or stalemate is likely to have much greater influence on the possibilities for future negotiations than the outcome of interactive problem solving. In fact, just as the military offensive produced a delay in our ability to gather a group in late spring 1997, other significant turns in political or military realities could require further modifications in our plans. This need to respond to official events necessitates persistence on the part of the third party team as the pendulum swings; it also necessitates flexibility of project design to respond to changing realities.

Chapter 6

Peacemaking in Karabakh

There is an evolution in human affairs spreading gradually over the planet, one might say since the time of Homer, which reaches now into the struggles in the Caucasus. In our time it is seen as the challenge of the post-Soviet period and is framed by talk about creation of a civil society.

Civil society is no small objective. Indeed, if one thinks of a civil society in broad terms, namely as society based upon equal dignity for those without political or military power, peacemakers today participate in one of the major paradigm shifts of human history. Nothing in ancient history or under the empires of the Khanates or the Turks, or the Czars, or in the Soviet experience, prepared the Caucasus for politics in which openness or truthtelling is the norm. And yet these are characteristics we increasingly identify as the "civil" in "civilization." They are part of a web that holds a peaceful society together, or keeps it peaceful.

Nothing, either, in these regions riven by ethnic conflict lays the groundwork for sharing power with such politically weaker members of society as women, Jews, or ethnic minorities. And that, if perhaps too simply stated, is also near the heart of what we mean by civil society. Political opportunity allows weaker parties to conceive of a time when they, too, will share in power, and they can therefore opt for nonviolent responses to their difficulties. Civil society is more than parliaments and laws which, unfortunately, may only confirm the power of elites. It also, and more importantly, includes dignity for the powerless, and this change from the past is monumental.

The war in Nagorno Karabakh, a mountainous region located entirely within the territory of Azerbaijan, is ostensibly a conflict over ethnic rights and political status. In 1988, when the war began, the population of the area was about 65 percent Armenian, 35 percent Azeri. In addition, there were large ethnic populations of Armenians elsewhere in Azerbaijan, and of Azeris scattered throughout Armenia. As a result of the war, there are today very few Armenians anywhere in Azerbaijan, except in Karabakh, and few Azeris anywhere in Armenia. There has been widespread ethnic cleansing. Karabakh is now 100 percent Armenian. Hundreds of thousands of Armenians who used to live and prosper in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, are gone, as are hundreds of thousands of Azeris who used to live in Armenia. This is a human tragedy of great proportion. Preoccupation, further, with warmaking has crippled efforts throughout the region to build healthy politics and economies.

It is progress that all sides in the dispute over Karabakh refer to the Helsinki Accords of 1975 as a basis for claim of right. Both, that is, adduce legal standards rather than the results of raw military power as the dependable arbiter. But in this case the Helsinki Accords cut both ways. They contain standards for self-determination, which the Karabakh Armenians invoke, and to the right to territorial integrity, to which the Azeris

by
Craig Barnes

lay claim. The Karabakh Armenians wish to be independent; the Azeris argue that there is no right to carve up an existing state, or to redraw boundaries by force. Both consider international law confirmation of their position, and both consider the Accords of 1975 a sufficient justification to continue killing. In this case, the law leads, not forward toward resolution, but backwards as an excuse to violence.

Nations are sometimes limited in the range of steps they can take toward peace, as the negotiators in the governmental talks over Karabakh have discovered. They cannot ignore the Helsinki Accords. And yet the Accords create a kind of legalistic trap. On one occasion the office of the president in Azerbaijan explained to our project negotiators, who were working in a second-track, citizens effort, that official negotiations—including concessions, if need be—could not proceed successfully without popular support. The question was then put to our team, can you help create a climate for popular acceptance of a different approach?

The Foundation for Global Community, (FGC), supported by the Stanford Center on Conflict and Negotiation, was invited in 1993 by officials in Yerevan, Armenia; Stepanakert, Karabakh; and Baku, Azerbaijan to begin this second-track, non-official effort aimed at the popular will, attempting to create a climate conducive to resolution in each of the three regions. The FGC effort did not focus on the status of Karabakh or political goals framed by the Helsinki Accords so much as the cultural, security, and economic goals which are often at the root of such disputes.

The plan was to draw together into a long-term dialogue opinion leaders from different constituencies of Armenian, Azeri, and Karabakhi society. Underpinning research was provided by Dr. Everett Rogers, currently of the University of New Mexico, who has shown that an idea spreads through society as a transfer from innovators—the peacemakers—to prominent leaders in local government, the intelligentsia and business communities. When an idea—in this case the idea of reconciliation and a shared nonviolent future—takes hold among opinion leaders popular support for it increases sharply. The implication is that activists for peace need not first overcome their stiffest opposition, the generals and nationalists, but can launch a movement if they begin with city councilors, bankers, playwrights, journalists, professors, and others of independent influence.

Two meetings based on this idea convened hand-picked leaders from Yerevan, Stepanakert, and Baku in 1993 and 1994. These dialogues were held in a retreat center near Ben Lomond, in the Santa Cruz Mountains of California, and the resulting talks have come to be known as the Ben Lomond Process. Participants included intellectuals, journalists, playwrights, a parliamentarian, a party leader, a former minister of health, two women who were well-known peace activists from each side, a war widow, a professor of philosophy, two filmmakers, two novelists and a leader of the Armenian Encyclopedia, among others.

The meetings were riven with political strife and the strong unwillingness of either side to acknowledge the history and experience of the other. They came seeking peace, but each side according to its own terms, as it understood them from the Helsinki Accords. Or they urged superior moral claims based on years of suffering caused by the empires with which each associated the other—Azeris at the hands of the Russians, Armenians at

the hands of the Turks. The concept of standing in the shoes of the enemy, or addressing the underlying security interests of the other, or addressing the moral or legal flaws in one's own position, was difficult to accept, especially since all participants were at some risk of condemnation when they returned to the nationalistic climates at home.

When these talks began, in 1993, the lights were dim in Yerevan; there was cold and suffering in the streets, and hundreds of thousands of refugees were streaming into Baku and Yerevan, fleeing the ravages of the war. The Turkic Azeris had imposed an oil embargo on Armenia, setting off among the Armenians psychological resonances with the 1915 genocide that took the lives of millions of Armenians. The Azeris, for their part, complained that the Armenians had started the military aggression; that in claiming Karabakh they had occupied, with Russian military help, over 20 percent of Azerbaijan's territory, pointing a dagger at the heart of the new Azerbaijani state. The Azeris suggested that the Armenians could end the blockade and their own pain if they ceded their claims to Karabakh. The Azeris were also trying to accommodate approximately 750,000 refugees who had flooded into the country as a result of ethnic cleansing in Karabakh and Armenia, and who were putting a considerable strain on Azerbaijan's economy and social fabric.

There was thus no lack of suffering on both sides. While the Armenians saw their identity as a people threatened, the Azeris saw their hard-won political independence threatened. Peoplehood and statehood cannot be bargained away, and the Helsinki Accords seemed to offer only the impossible choice of one or the other. The participants from Karabakh, both Armenian and Azeri, being most traumatized by the actual war, were also the most difficult to wean from nationalistic rhetoric and passionate calls to arms.

In this situation, the beginning of the Ben Lomond Process, during 1993 and 1994, involved heated, passionate claims of legal and moral right, often based on competition over whose suffering had been greater. The talks seemed to be going nowhere. Neither side offered compromise, and both seemed primarily intent on justifying their positions to the Americans present. Each seemed much less interested in negotiating with its opponents than in courting heavy-hitting third parties to weigh in on its side and helping ensure eventual victory.

It gradually became clear, however, that the American government had no plans to intervene in the Karabakh issue. And progress was occurring at another level. Relationships were forming; people returned from the joint meetings saying publicly that they had made useful personal connections. There was some hope in this. Moreover, in March 1995, the FGC team, meeting in Yerevan, Baku, and Stepanakert, was asked the question, "What about starting with a cease-fire, and postponing the political questions?"

The parties, importantly, on another front, appeared to be registering personal gains simply from participation in the Ben Lomond Process. They seemed to be experiencing a humanization of the opposition. In March 1996, the Foundation for Global Community sent representatives to Baku and Yerevan for three months, to develop conflict resolution skills among participants, and add to the foundation for negotiations. Azeris, who by then felt that they had lost the war, seemed more willing to engage in the mechanics of resolution training, even attempting to practice role reversal. This was a shift from earlier

sessions in which all sides had been reluctant to engage in exercises which required articulation of the other side's positions.

Armenians, on the other hand, during the summer sessions of 1996, urged a "return to normalcy" between the two countries, that is, a return to pre-war pacific relations. Though it was apparently benignly intended, the offer was seen by Azeris as a claim to victory and an attempt to ignore the injustices of the war. Armenians, however, were not willing to negotiate questions of political status, or to jeopardize their war gains. Besides, as mere citizens, they accurately claimed a lack of authority.

The Armenians authored a new suggestion. It may be too soon, they argued, for any attempt to resolve the status question or to decide such major political questions as buffer zones, peacekeeping troops, or return of refugees. There is insufficient history of trust to build upon for there to be a return of refugees, for example. FGC had suggested the return of small numbers of refugees to carefully selected villages in pilot projects. The Armenians resisted this suggestion since they thought refugee return would primarily benefit Azeris who wished to return to Karabakh. They seemed less interested themselves in returning to Baku. Security could not be guaranteed for returnees either in Karabakh or in Baku, they argued. "We need to create a new story," they suggested, "one of cooperation on projects or goals not so loaded with political peril." The Armenians then suggested a number of projects which they believed could be the subject of cooperation and could be pursued with their Ben Lomond colleagues. The process itself had begun to relieve some of the sense of betrayal that had been a first result of the war on both sides.

The Armenian proposals became the starting point for a week-long joint meeting in Tbilisi in September 1996. The meeting, facilitated by FGC, was now framed to address the possibilities of cooperation rather than historical questions of genocide and aggression. The Helsinki Accords were therefore not an issue, nor was the question of the ultimate status of Karabakh. During these sessions, for the first time, partly as a result of the conflict resolution training, and partly as a result of the changed agenda, the parties traded views with consideration, thoughtfulness, and a high degree of professionalism.

The Tbilisi meetings produced concrete agreement on six joint projects ranging from studies of sources of enemy demonization, to children's stories, ecological studies, measures to rehabilitate the psyches of children damaged by war, and the institutionalization of a Peace Service. FGC maintained tight control of the agenda, helping keep it focused on the practicalities of future cooperation. Matters such as costing of computers for use in e-mail communication; future visits by Armenians or Azeris to each other's cities; joint fundraising strategies; or exchanges of information concerning political pressures from the respective governments all became important. These matters were discussed while the long-term status of Karabakh was not, and resolution of these simple practical matters gradually created an overall sense of progress, building on the momentum generated by small successes and encouraging participants to look toward the future rather than the past. Partisans who had been near the emotional breaking point during earlier meetings were cool and constructive during the Tbilisi sessions.

Follow-up on these projects continues with the establishment of direct e-mail connection between participants, for the first time overcoming a communications barrier that has blocked progress since 1993. There is also, unfortunately, growing nationalist

sentiment in both Armenia and Azerbaijan. In this climate, one of the leading Ben Lomond participants has been attacked publicly in the Baku press for traitorously "befriending or supporting" Armenians. These attacks have assuredly daunted other wouldbe project participants. The attacks underscore the need for continuing international interest in the region, without which only the truly heroic peace crusaders remain in the public eye and others, unsupported and worried, remain quiet.

Ben Lomond participants see themselves engaged in a sort of race with the nationalists who increasingly favor military solutions. Supporters of nonviolent solutions must build a new network of public opinion and a new series of experiences—that is, new conversations within multiple constituencies of opinion leaders, a new history to replace the old one—must get it into the press, and must do so before the nationalists' frustration boils over into renewed conflict.

As these participants experiment with direct cooperation and daily communication by e-mail, the pace of their successes will accelerate. The new projects provide an excuse and rationale to amplify and expand the civil discourse and keep the peacekeepers in the race.

Part II: Training for Peacemaking

Chapter 7

Track 1½ Diplomacy in Northern Ireland

by
Mary Boergers

The "Track 1½" Diplomacy project of the Ireland–U.S. Public Leadership Program (IUSPLP) at the University of Maryland is an innovative peacebuilding initiative that focuses on emerging political leaders. The project targets political leaders between twenty and forty years old from Northern Ireland and the Republic because they are less likely to be trapped in old stereotypes or constrained by the rigid ideology of the incumbent politicians. They are also more likely than grassroots community leaders eventually to secure the political power required to effect positive change. By developing the leadership potential of the next generation of political leaders and teaching them conflict resolution and negotiating skills, IUSPLP believes that a major step can be taken toward lasting peace. IUSPLP's efforts in Northern Ireland can be a model for other parts of the world experiencing intractable ethnic and religious conflict.

IUSPLP, with funding from the United States Institute of Peace, is working to help rebuild the political infrastructure in Northern Ireland. IUSPLP has begun a sustained and comprehensive training program for a group of young leaders from all of the major political parties in Northern Ireland and the Republic. It uses cutting edge technology as a means of providing the emerging leaders with the skills needed to permanently end the violence and return to the rule of law.

In developing IUSPLP's Track 1½ Diplomacy project, we learned that several elements are key to success. They are

- support by the current political leaders;
- a neutral setting;
- participation by all significant political parties, if possible;
- confidentiality;
- participation by women and other underrepresented groups;
- inclusion of young American political leaders;
- campaign skills training as well as negotiating and conflict resolution training; and
- establishment of a mentoring program.

To be effective, a project needs to take into account the political realities facing the young leaders, helping them learn ways to take risks for peace without undermining their political futures. Ethnic or religious groups involved in long-term conflict are intolerant of new ideas, different ways of doing things, or anyone who strays from the "party line." It is essential to teach participants how to cope back home and to lead in a community of people stuck in old stereotypes and overwhelmed with the hatred that stems from centuries of grievance.

One way to protect the political future of the young leaders is to have the support of the current party leaders, if possible having them select the participants. This sanctions and legitimizes the program while helping to insulate participants from personal political attack. Finding a neutral location away from the conflict allows the young leaders a degree of space and creates an atmosphere that is more conducive to dialogue, personal growth, and reflection. Keeping details of the training confidential and out of the media is essential. The media spotlight only serves to force participants into rigid official positions and may jeopardize their political future.

The establishment of trust among program participants and a willingness to understand the "other" will only occur over time. That is why an ongoing project that offers several opportunities for the young leaders to come together is necessary if such a training project is to have a long-term impact.

Mandating that at least one-third of the participants be female positively affects the dynamics of the program. It brings into the training a group of people who are more likely to be focused on the present and future and less likely to be trapped in the old macho ideologies that have been obstacles to peace for generations. Having young Americans participate adds a neutral element and helps prevent automatic polarization along traditional ethnic and religious lines.

Campaign training is a powerful incentive for the emerging leaders who eagerly seek ways to hone their electioneering skills. In fact it is this training which makes some willing to take the personal and political risks of participating in the overall project.

Establishing a mentoring component helps extend the reach of the training beyond the program's participants by creating an intergenerational leadership ladder. The mentoring program IUSPLP created brings together senior party leaders with the emerging leaders in their own parties while each young leader mentors a university or high school student.

"I find myself starting to understand my opponent's beliefs. I get confused because I wonder if my own beliefs are that important to me. Is this natural? Does everyone feel like this?"

—An emerging Irish political leader

Content of the Training Program

The initial conference that IUSPLP conducted was historic because it bought together, for the first time, representatives of all of the major political parties in Northern Ireland and in the Republic. The training focus was on transformational leadership development and included workshops to improve the emerging leaders' public speaking, media relations, and television skills.

Because the BBC and Belfast Telegraph discovered that the initial conference was taking place and because participation was controversial and personally dangerous, these

accommodations were made so that all participants could attend: Unionists were not required to have direct dialogue with the participants from Sinn Fein. While everyone took part in large group presentations, small group discussions were kept separate.

One unique aspect of the training program was the use of the College of Business and Management's IBM Multimedia Teaching Theater at the University of Maryland. The IBM Theater, a state-of-the-art, fully networked computer facility, enabled participants to communicate anonymously and to consider ideas without regard to which side of the sectarian divide the idea came from. Thus, participants could focus on what was being said rather than who was doing the talking.

While this anonymous environment has great potential, we learned just how volatile it can be. In fact the session in the IBM Theater proved the most difficult and challenging of the whole conference. The anonymous environment, without the usual social constraints, brought out the participants' intense fears and deep-seated antagonisms. As difficult as it was, however, the IBM Theater was also the most transformational event of the conference.

The second phase of the training program, the Conflict Transformation Conference, supported by the United States Institute of Peace, focused on assisting participants to understand the nature of dialogue and develop the skills needed to address their underlying needs and fears. It helped the young leaders gain insight into one another's concerns and clarified how assumptions feed into a sense of impasse. The skills were developed in an action-reflection mode, moving from one-on-one negotiations, to small group negotiations, to third party mediation. The issues under negotiation progressed from such non-threatening issues as a dispute on the creation of a health center to sensitive dialogue about the issue of decommissioning weapons. The discussion of decommissioning tested whether participants would be able to transfer learning to the actual issues that divide them in Northern Ireland.

Training components featured lectures, case studies, simulations, role-playing exercises, and reflection sessions, as well as opportunities to practice delivering a campaign message on camera and anonymous interactive dialogue through interconnected computers in the IBM Multimedia Theater. The content included an introduction to the theoretical basis of the sources of conflict, conflict resolution, and group dynamics; simulations to put conflict resolution theory into practice; a description of the elements of an effective mentoring relationship; and information on effective campaign message development and practice in on-camera public speaking, as well as strategies for dealing with the press.

The experiential training modules deepened participants' understanding of the underlying motivations of people in conflict, barriers to conflict resolution, and techniques for ameliorating situations of seemingly intractable conflict. The young leaders' group explored techniques designed to help them understand how to clarify interests, create options, identify alternatives, reframe the issues, separate people issues from substantive issues, and develop strategies for reaching consensus.

The second conference again used the cutting edge technology in the College of Business's IBM Teaching Theater to promote interactive problem solving and cooperative learning. This time, however, the use of the groupware was much more successful in

demonstrating how anonymous computer brainstorming can help promote dialogue among people from rigidly polarized societies. In the IBM Theater we were able to use the computers to elicit issues of importance to participants, set priorities, and establish an agenda which reflected the group's needs. The anonymous environment gave everyone an equal voice, promoted inclusion of all points of view, and allowed hidden issues to surface in a nonthreatening way.

The most disappointing aspect of the Track 1½ Diplomacy project was that we were not able to secure participation from the two largest Unionist parties at the second conference. The week before the conference, the IRA killed two policemen in Northern Ireland. This traumatized the Unionist community and resulted in the Ulster Unionist Party and Democratic Unionist Party representatives refusing to participate unless we rescinded our invitation to Sinn Fein. However, it was decided that in order not to mimic the political pressures in Northern Ireland, the session should go ahead as planned. People could exclude themselves but they could not force the exclusion of others.

Track 1½ Diplomacy is a challenging, difficult and at times frustrating undertaking. It faces the same political pressures, pitfalls and tensions as Track 1. Events in the official political arena inevitably affect any Track 1½ initiative. The program can be undermined and the whole project jeopardized by incidents of violence. However, the potential to transform the political landscape makes it all worthwhile. As Margaret Mead said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world, indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Chapter 8

University Students and Women as Peace-Builders in the Transcaucasus

by
Deborah K.
Welsh

In 1992, the board of directors of the National Peace Foundation (NPF) responded to the request of several professional women in Armenia, including scholars and journalists, to arrange a meeting with their Azeri counterparts. At the time, the armed struggle over Nagorno Karabakh, the ethnic Armenian enclave within Azerbaijan, was raging. Although the vision of these women had yet to be clearly defined, it was based on the premise that there must be actions women could take to ease the conflict situation between their two countries. The NPF leadership decided also to include women from Georgia in the meetings.

In 1994, in Washington, D.C., six women from each of the republics began what has become an ongoing dialogue. They agreed to meet, under ground rules stating that they would neither get bogged down in reciting historic offenses nor try to forge peace pacts. At the same time they would not ignore elements of the conflicts—issues of territorial rights, regional self-determination, refugees, prisoners of war—and might try to ameliorate some of them.

NPF board member Deborah Welsh, who had been presenting courses in "Negotiating in a Market Economy" in the region for several years, accepted the Armenians' request and visited and interviewed potential peacebuilding agents among the Azeri, Georgian, and Armenian women in their home countries. Between 1992 and 1994, over the course of several trips to the region, Welsh interviewed more than forty women. NPF decided that those selected had to fall into one of the following categories. They had to be women of influence in scholarly, scientific, or other intellectual arenas; women who had served in policymaking positions; women involved with the new press agencies; or women who were willing to explore new kinds of relationships within the region. These interviews yielded what was to become the Transcaucasus Women's Dialogue (TWD).

Cultivating a Safe Environment

The women from Azerbaijan and Armenia expressed considerable concern about their safety during the planned dialogues. These concerns were addressed in separate meetings in which each participant expressed her fears, such as "aggressive" behavior that would discourage civil interaction. The facilitator then suggested ways in which such an event might be handled which the women understood and accepted. The participants then tried to anticipate what the participants from the other country were likely to be fearing.

These delegation-specific discussions provided the first of several important changes of expectation as members discovered that the "other" participants were experiencing similar concerns. Recommended ground rules were expanded and accepted by all delegations.

Language, Interpretation, and Concepts

Before the first meeting in Washington, D.C., each country's delegation met separately with Professor Welsh in a four-hour session during which the delegates translated into Russian a list of the most frequently used words, phrases, and concepts relating to dialogue and negotiation in hopes that a shared vocabulary might minimize misunderstanding. However, it became increasingly clear that even though Russian vocabulary was being used, understandings of the concepts often varied among the delegations. Nevertheless, this early process provided a language base on which the further work of the Transcaucasus Women's Dialogue continues to depend.

Through visits to the homes and countries of the participants, and the meetings which developed the language for the dialogues, the facilitator realized how complex a barrier was raised by interethnic communication, both among the delegations and between the facilitator and the delegations. (In later meetings the barrier posed by class differences also became apparent.) The facilitator worked to uncover for the participants the subtleties and nuances involved in this kind of communication, and was able to alert the participants to cultural assumptions inherent in cross-cultural communication.

Goals and Objectives

From the very beginning the facilitators posed this question to the TWD: "What informal structures and resource networks need to be in place when peace is declared?" The facilitators' objectives were to elicit from the participants, as individuals and as representatives of their countries, what components of civil society were necessary if the talents and expertise of women were to be made available upon the signing of official peace treaties.

The women had not had many previous opportunities with collaborative problem-solving. The dialogue process was so novel that it took a series of meetings before they were comfortable with it. In addition to the expected conflicts and disagreements among the delegations, there was also intra-delegation conflict and disagreements. A carefully nurtured transition from "visionaries and philosophers" to action-agents brought about major transformation in delegates' perception of themselves and their capacity to affect the world. The most exciting continuing challenge is to explore how each delegate's analytic and organizational talents can enrich those of the other participants.

Of course, the Transcaucasus has gone through enormous change since the TWD's first meeting in 1994. Various degrees of democracy have evolved, along with some backsliding (as in the case of freedom of the press). Focus on the military situation has been largely replaced by concerns over the conditions of refugees and internally displaced persons. The drastic changes in the role of women in all three countries have, with good reason, alarmed the women of the dialogues. Women are now expected to accept work in conditions outside their previously protected cultural domains, conditions which are often suspect and humiliating to male family members. When this happens, the woman is in danger of losing her status in the family. Heavy economic burdens are falling increasingly on younger women. The increase in prostitution is a major method of holding families together, and the demands that force the younger women to accept this humiliating role have had a profound impact on the dignity and self-respect of the refugee community, as well as, by implication, polarizing the intraethnic cultures. Civil conflict still

threatens, particularly when permanent residents must compete with refugees and displaced persons for scarce employment. And as urban and rural values clash, some may resort to violence to preserve what they perceive as traditional cultural values.

Women from all three countries face these complex issues, and as they struggle to address them, the delegates share information with each other, engaging in a functional approach to peace building.

Another important component of the TWD concept involves developing leadership training in conflict prevention for university students from the three countries. This training helps increase these students' awareness of their responsibility for the region's economic and social stability. The first two workshops, supported by the United States Institute of Peace, were held in 1997, in Tbilisi. Over 40 students from the region and from Crimea participated each week. Professors from the TWD countries—Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan—and from Ukraine, formed a joint team with Americans Deborah Welsh and Rebecca Chase to provide the training.

The students were placed in teams with one student from each country on each. They spent a week resolving disguised border disputes, hazardous waste disposal decisions, and performing exercises that increased their understanding of the need to develop relationships based on a "working trust" for regional economic and cultural survival. Their high energy level played a large part in the success of these workshops, as the students, already excited by the opportunity, and prepared by their professors for the intellectual and emotional adventures awaiting them, eagerly addressed their tasks. The professors, who had formerly studied the methodology and trained under Welsh in Yerevan and Baku, brought great richness to the workshops and contributed very significantly to their success.

One outcome of the Tbilisi workshops is a collaborative effort to develop a weekly children's television program. Groups of students and several professors from Armenia and Azerbaijan plan to develop scenarios which focus on conflict prevention, tolerance-building and environmental protection, issues discussed and negotiated during the Tbilisi workshops. Joint meetings of the writers and puppet-masters are expected to be organized in Tbilisi.

Constraints and Successes

Problems of communication and of sustained funding seriously inhibit progress with these efforts. Those who are truly dedicated stay with the project through all the difficulties. But valuable insights and talent are lost when a large enough group cannot gather to plan for the future. At this time, e-mail and telephone communication are too expensive for exploring opportunities and brainstorming. But regular and sustained communication is essential to cross-cultural projects.

Despite these difficulties, the program has enabled participants to suspend their stereotypical perceptions of those from the other groups. The participants are committed to the continuation of the Transcaucasus Women's Dialogue and its workshops on leadership in conflict prevention and management. It is clear that the young men and women who participated in the USIP-funded Tbilisi workshops will lead their region into a more stable and collegial civil society. In this one shared undertaking alone, the Transcaucasus Women's Dialogue has, after four years, clearly proven its worth.

Part III: Interaction Among Young People

Chapter 9

Seeds of Peace in the Middle East

by
John Wallach

Seeds of Peace exists to fill a void: addressing a human dimension that governments ignore. Peace treaties are negotiated by governments and signed by presidents or prime ministers. However, this does not mean that true peace subsequently exists. More often than not, there is no practical basis to convert dreams into reality. In fact, while treaties themselves are said to "go into force," little is being done to change the climate in which ordinary people work, study, and play. Creating a secure environment in which the next generation can experience peace is the aim of The Seeds of Peace International Camp for Conflict Resolution.

Israeli, Palestinian, Egyptian, Jordanian, Moroccan, Tunisian, and Gulf State teenagers are encouraged to enroll in the program. Schools throughout the Middle East nominate students who have both a working knowledge of English and proven leadership potential. They write an essay, "Why I Want To Make Peace," and are interviewed individually as well as in groups. The final selection process, which is administered by each government, is designed to produce a widely varied group of young people which reflects the social, political, and economic composition of each society. Through their participation, governments help send the signal that the involvement of ordinary people in the peace process is as vital as that of the governments themselves.

The Seeds of Peace goal is to create a safe place—a 150-acre camp along the shores of Pleasant Lake in Otisfield, Maine—where teenagers who have grown up perceiving the "other" as a permanent enemy can begin to feel comfortable with their adversary. Of course, Seeds of Peace tries to achieve more, trying to encourage the next generation to make the personal investment in forming lasting friendships with individuals they are often taught to hate. We focus on 13 to 15-year-olds because they are still young enough to experience profound psychological change, yet mature enough to understand the importance and difficulty of the challenges they face.

Creating a secure physical environment is the first part of the challenge. Because a major source of the conflict is territorial, it is important to conduct the program on neutral ground. The American government has a long track record of helping to mediate the Arab-Israeli conflict; therefore, the program is designed to take place in the United States. Moreover, the uniquely American institution of summer camp is ideal for experiencing coexistence. Maine provides natural beauty, helping to reinforce the concept of a "return to basics," while simultaneously fostering the excitement of creating a new community, a

virtual "nation of peace." Bunking and eating together, and a carefully programmed schedule of swimming, canoeing, soccer, basketball, street hockey, drama, crafts, archery, and other activities involve the campers in cross-national team-building. These exercises encourage acceptance of the "other" as non-threatening and allow for the potential to see the "other" as a friend.

Creating a personal support system is the second part of the challenge. The personal environment is as important as the physical setting. A team of counselors and facilitators is carefully selected on the basis of relevant conflict resolution experience. They train together in the week preceding camp to establish trust and confidence in one another — requisite to a stable foundation for building the Seeds of Peace community with the campers.

The heart of the program is the daily conflict resolution seminar, called a "coexistence" session. Trained facilitators spend 90 minutes guiding intensely emotional exchanges which are occasionally accompanied by a flow of tears. There are twelve coexistence sessions every day, six in the morning and six in the evening. They are often led by Arab and Israeli facilitators paired to function as role models and to help reinforce a common objective: learning the listening and debating skills that will enable two hostile peoples to respect one another.

Once the youngsters have relaxed in their new environment, and have accepted the possibility of friendship, the coexistence sessions become vital to achieving the psychological and emotional breakthroughs that allow them to bond. The youngsters initially need to vent their feelings of victimization and injustice and to voice their prejudices and preconceptions, no matter how spiteful, before any catharsis can take place.

The stories of suffering that are shared in the intimacy of the camp lodge permit the grief of both peoples to be heard. This is the first step in the healing process. Only when both groups stop competing over who is suffering the most—and understand that all are victims—can the work of building a new basis for coexistence begin.

For example, almost every Israeli has been conditioned to believe that the Holocaust is the ultimate defining experience of the Jewish people. Before you can expect an Israeli to empathize with Palestinian suffering, the Israeli must have the opportunity to sensitize Arab participants in the coexistence sessions to the roots of Jewish insecurity. For Palestinians, the creation of Israel—which deprived them of their lands—is due entirely to the Holocaust, without which Palestinians do not believe they would have suffered the loss of their land. They were clearly not responsible for the suffering of the Jews in the Holocaust; therefore, they do not accept it as a legitimate Israeli argument in the competition of suffering.

Yet for the Israeli to be able to open up, he or she must be allowed the opportunity to explain that the Holocaust was not merely murder on a grand scale but the systematic extermination or genocide of an entire people. The Israeli needs to convey his ingrained fear that the Jews remain a persecuted people—witness the latest bus bombing—and that only the shield of nuclear weapons and regional superpower status provides the guarantee that there will not be another Holocaust. Once a teenager has had this opportunity, he or she may be more prepared to listen to the suffering of others.

Similarly, before you can expect Palestinians to empathize with the profound fear of Israelis, they must have the chance to share their own often heart-wrenching personal histories. This means that 14-year-old Mohammed, who still bears the scars from beatings by Israeli soldiers and the fragment of a bullet in his shinbone, needs to share the saga of seeing his friends shot during an anti-Israeli demonstration. "Excuse me, you want to know why we throw stones?" he said in a coexistence meeting. "Because I see my lands, our lands, Palestinian lands stolen every day, every day. I see my city become settlements every day. I saw my two friends killed. I saw blood on the ground. I saw my aunt die in the ambulance because the soldiers stopped the ambulance. When they shot me on my back and foot, and bullets in my leg, what can you do if you are Palestinian and that's happening to you? What can you do, watch or throw stones?"

This is only one example of the intensity of exchanges that take place every day over a period of three weeks under the watchful eyes of the facilitators. Their goal is for these youngsters to bond with each other even if they cannot agree on very much. "I am happy for the fact that outside of the coexistence sessions we are still friends," said Noa. Indeed, it is largely *because* they have learned to hear each other, even if they don't like what they hear, that they remain friends on the playing fields. Their sense of personal achievement stems from the fact that they are able to disagree, often vehemently, and yet maintain the sense of unity that defines the new group they have formed.

Nancy, an Egyptian, said: "I never would have thought that I would share with Israelis my roses and thorns [a good and a bad experience in camp], pray with them before I sleep in my bunk, eat with them from the same main dish three times a day and share our differences and similarities. A friendship between me and an Egyptian is strong because of what we have in common. But between me and an Israeli it's strong because we were able to overcome our differences and still admire each other for them."

Dan, a 13-year-old Israeli, put it boldly when he addressed an adult audience. "Picture this, an Israeli kid, a Palestinian kid, an Egyptian kid, and a Jordanian kid sleep next to each other. They share their food, the soap, the toothpaste, everything. They share their life. I want you to tell me if that's a dream or if that's reality. If you think it's a dream, come to my bunk and see." Dr. Stanley Walzer, former chief of child psychiatry at Children's Hospital in Boston and a staff member, explained that for Dan, "the biggest accomplishment is not that he has accepted the Palestinian right to a state, which I think many kids have, but just coexistence in the most literal sense of the word. He is coexisting with Palestinians and he is proud of it. It means something to him."

There are, of course, many limitations. Seeds of Peace now has a full-time coordinator in Jerusalem whose responsibilities include helping our graduates publish a monthly newspaper, *The Olive Branch,* and arranging as many reunions, in homes and schools, as possible. But the lack of funds for a more ambitious follow-up program is a major handicap. Many youngsters feel abandoned when they return home. Leen, a Jordanian, said that after she made a presentation to her class about Seeds of Peace, and was walking down the hall to her Arabic class, "this guy from the ninth grade made eye contact with me, and said, 'Traitor!' If I had time, I would have stopped and talked to the guy. But I was in a hurry for my next lesson so I gave the guy a dangerous look and walked away. It hurt to see someone say that, but I should expect it when some people are extremists." A

Palestinian teenager wrote that when she returned to Gaza, her friends simply could not believe that she had slept in the same bunk with Israelis "and they didn't kill you."

The computer era, however, has helped these youngsters maintain a virtual community after they return home. Access to the Internet affords them the privacy of being able to maintain relationships with the "other" without their immediate friends or family being fully aware of it. More importantly, the Internet allows our graduates to share their deepest feelings as they did at camp, in the immediate aftermath of terrorist incidents and other acts aimed at destroying the peace process. But where e-mail communication can easily take place across borders, arranging reunions in the region is much harder. Obtaining entry permits for West Bank Palestinians, or visas for Jordanians and Egyptians to visit friends in Israel, may take weeks or months and requires fortitude to battle the bureaucracy. Our aim, moreover, is to encourage other bordering nations, particularly Syria and Lebanon, to participate in the program. That, too, is almost impossible in the current political climate. The Damascus government believes that such people-to-people exchanges, even among teenagers, are goodwill gestures that reward Israel for its continuing occupation of the Golan Heights. Syria will not join, nor allow its Lebanese ally to participate, until it regains sovereignty over the Golan Heights.

What, then, have we learned in the first five years of Seeds of Peace? First, to remain independent. Accepting official government funding would seriously compromise our integrity. For example, Arab governments do not support exposing these youngsters to the pain of the Holocaust Museum in Washington. Yet it is important for Arab teenagers to see the museum because many of them have never been taught about the Holocaust and consequently do not accept the genocide—despite the searing personal accounts they heard from their Israeli peers during coexistence.

Similarly, the Israeli government objects to our permitting Palestinian teenagers to say they are from Palestine—even though we insist that the Palestinians make clear they mean an as-yet undeclared state of Palestine that will coexist with Israel. It is also important for the Palestinian youngsters—despite Israeli objections—to have their flag raised, and to sing their national anthem, when the flags are raised, and anthems are sung, of all the participating nations.

We have learned many practical lessons as well, for example, that coexistence sessions are more successful if they are facilitated by a team, preferably two opposites in gender, race, or nationality. That way the two can check each other while simultaneously demonstrating that opposites can work together.

But the most important lesson we have learned is never to underestimate the courage and conviction of the next generation of Arabs and Israelis. Having had the coexistence experience that enabled them to deal with their fears and prejudices, many of these young people may now be willing to fight as hard for peace as their fathers fought in war. Among our youngsters, and their families, there are signs of a willingness to take the required risks. A Palestinian father was publicly warned against sending his daughter to Seeds of Peace during the weekly sermon at his Hebron mosque. He refused to be intimidated, getting up several hours early to speed his daughter to the airport to catch the plane.

There are other examples. On September 25 and 26, 1996 when rioting followed the Israeli opening of an archaeological tunnel in East Jerusalem, a Palestinian girl braved

Israeli bullets to get to the home of an Israeli friend she had met at camp. They stayed up all night arguing, and did not agree on anything, but it was comforting for the Israeli that her Palestinian friend had risked her life to get there. Success, in short, cannot be measured by headlines. What these youngsters are achieving is barely notable in newspapers. It is small print: a group of Israeli teenagers taking a teary-eyed Palestinian from Jericho to see the house in Ein Kerem, a neighborhood of Jerusalem, where her father was born. It is a proud Palestinian father taking an Israeli friend of his son to see "liberated" Jericho, and telling the inquisitive Palestinian police, "I am only showing Jericho to my two sons." There are hundreds more stories like these.

In the final analysis, our success or failure must be measured by the degree to which our Israeli and Palestinian graduates remain in touch with each other when the situation deteriorates in the region. That is when they are most susceptible to resuming old habits and falling prey to propagandists.

The chat session has now become a weekly event. Regular e-mail communication also continues. Dozens of messages are sent every day, some filled with pain and anger, others with compassion, reassurance, and encouragement. Many are about the normal, everyday things that kids have to deal with: school, friends, family. They convey a genuine caring about the Seeds of Peace community. "People," e-mailed Yazeed from Jordan. "We have to communicate. We have to know each other even better. We have to do what our leaders are not doing—and will not do if we don't push them. All of us are so very lucky to be a part of the Seeds of Peace family. Please continue fighting for what you believe in."

Chapter 10

Working with Conflict Groups in the Middle East: The School for Peace

by
Rabah Halabi

The School for Peace (SFP) is an educational center dealing with the Arab-Israeli conflict. The institution is situated in the unique joint Arab-Jewish village of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam ("Oasis for peace"). Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam is the only village in Israel established as a mutual initiative of Jews and Arabs as a model of cooperation and equal coexistence.

The founders of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam shared the assumption that close cooperation between the two peoples is not only historically inevitable, but can also be of mutual benefit. The effort to establish a high level of creative cooperation between the Arab and Jewish members of the community underlies their every joint endeavor and project. The foremost of these are the community's pioneering educational facilities, including a binational and bilingual children's educational system, and the School for Peace.

The main work of the SFP has been to create joint activities and encounters for Jews and Arabs throughout Israel and (increasingly) from the Palestinian territories. Since its establishment, some 22,000 Arabs and Jews have participated in these activities. The participants are of different ages, and from different areas and socio-economic groups. The main and largest project of the SFP has been its youth encounter program, which brings together 16- and 17-year-old students for a four-day residential encounter workshop. Every year the program is attended by some 1,000 students. Another important initiative includes academic courses conducted in conjunction with the social psychology departments of the Haifa, Tel-Aviv, Ben Gurion, and Hebrew Universities. These are annual courses that examine long-term Jewish-Arab conflict group process in the light of group theory. The courses are attended by equal numbers of Arab and Jewish graduate students in the social sciences and the humanities.

Since the inception of the peace process between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, the School for Peace has been working with Palestinian organizations to conduct joint activities between many target populations on both sides.

Many other projects are also conducted, but this article will describe the professional approach upon which the SFP's educational work is based and which sets it apart from many other organizations in Israel and abroad. Most encounters between Arabs and Jews conducted in Israel today adopt a contact or group-dynamics approach. According to this approach, the purpose of bringing the participants together is to reduce stereotypes and to create personal or social relationships. When we began our own encounter work at the SFP we also used this approach, since it was the only one available to us at the time. However, due to growing dissatisfaction with its effectiveness in our field work, over the years we developed a quite different approach to dealing with conflict groups.

Today, in the encounter work, our main purpose is neither to bring Jews and Arabs closer together, nor to reduce stereotypes. If this happens as a result of the meeting, all well and good. However, our principal objective is to develop the social and political awareness of the participants, and to help them to identify and articulate their own position in the conflict. We enable the participants to crystallize their opinions on the conflict based on an informed understanding of the realities. In order to accomplish this we emphasize the aspect of national identity in the group work, and place the conflict at the heart of the dialogue.

In preparing the framework of the encounter, we aim for numerical equality between the Arab and Jewish participants. Each small group, of 12 to 15 participants, is co-facilitated by an Arab and a Jew.

For a part of the group work, the small group is further subdivided into uni-national forums. In these sessions, the participants meet only with the facilitator of their own national group.

The deliberate emphasis on the national group aspects of the encounter guides the work and manner of intervention of the facilitator. The facilitation is based on three assumptions. First, the essence of the group work is the encounter between the two national groups, rather than between individuals. Thus the focus of the intervention is on what happens between two groups; individuals are referred to as representatives of their national group.

Second, the small group in which the encounter takes place is seen as a microcosm of the reality outside, with all that this implies. Processes indicative of the dominance of the majority group against the perceived weakness of the minority, for instance, are regarded as representative of parallel processes in the macrocosm. Finally, the encounter does not take place in isolation from reality. There is an interaction between what happens in the group and what happens outside, so it remains necessary to relate to external influences on the group process.

This approach to the work is difficult for participants and facilitators alike. The conflict becomes the central experience of the group process, and this creates tension, anger, and frustration. Yet this reality, and participants are exposed to it in order to cope with it. The encounter enables them to contact and rethink assumptions and positions held, but usually suppressed, in daily life. By seeing the reactions these evoke when exposed in the binational forum, and by hearing the counter-positions and experience of their counterparts, participants are better able to understand and rethink their own.

Due to long experience with encounter work in NS/WAS, we are able to identify typical and recurring processes in the encounter between the two groups. We seek to assure that the dynamics of the group reflect Jewish-Arab relations in Israel as a whole. If so, the identification and the understanding of these may present options for the improvement of the relations between the two peoples in the future.

The four stages of the encounter develop as follows.

The first stage: By carefully avoiding all references to the conflict, participants are able to maintain a pleasant and polite atmosphere in their contacts with the other group. The Jewish group sets the agenda for the discussion and controls the dynamics of the

encounter. This stage represents a continuation of the relations between the two peoples in day to day life.

The second stage: The Arab group presents its experience, bringing stories of dispossession and oppression, and of the discrimination they experience today in Israeli society. At this stage the atmosphere grows tense. The good relations between the groups experienced in the first stage are now threatened. By virtue of its moral advantage as victim, the Arab group gains in strength. The Jewish group is at first able to maintain tolerance by finding rationalizations for the suffering caused to the Arabs. However, as this grows harder, it soon begins to challenge the reliability of the material brought by the Arabs, and counters it with the Jewish version of events.

The third stage: The Jewish group raises the issue of national security. It deprecates what it describes as the inferior moral values of the Arab group. It competes with the Arab group for the position of victim, arguing that the Jews, too, are victims of historical circumstances. This stage is characterized by a depressing and gloomy atmosphere. Much anger and frustration finds release. Just remaining in the room becomes difficult. The Jewish group is actually attempting to restore its previous position of control, yet the Arab group refuses to yield. An all-out battle breaks out between the two groups. However, when the smoke begins to clear, there is the possibility that a new, more equal relationship may be established between the two groups.

The fourth stage: The Jewish group finds itself willing to concede a portion of its former power when it feels the advantages of a greater equality in the room. It recognizes the Arabs as a national group with legitimate rights. The ensuing dialogue becomes more equal. There is an atmosphere of conciliation, permitting introspection that allows the participants to better understand the significance and motivation behind their declarations and behavior. It should be mentioned that although there is a more equal relationship in the room, the participants are keenly aware that nothing that takes place in the workshop will alter the (highly unequal) relations between the two peoples in the external reality.

Our experience shows that the change in power relations between the groups only takes place if the Arab group expresses its national identity in a clear, decisive, and assertive way. This comes as a complete surprise to the Jewish group, which finds it very difficult to cope with the unsettlement of the status quo. In spite of this, the Jewish participants show greater respect for those Arabs who state their demands with the highest assertiveness and determination. This respect is expressed in the fact that the principal dialogue takes place between the representatives of power in the room, rather than between those who adopt positions of compromise or weakness. If, as we believe, the dynamics of the group work reflect the external reality, we may say that an essential change in Arab-Jewish relations will occur only when the Arabs are sufficiently empowered to assertively demand their rights. The majority—in the room as well as in society—will not surrender its position of strength simply on the basis of good will, generosity, or liberal ideas.

Since the reality outside the room is unfortunately too strong to be changed simply on the basis of educational work, our primary interest in the encounters is in the changes experienced by the participants themselves. The encounter provides them the opportunity

to effect a change in themselves by developing a more healthy and humane identity. In general, the Jewish group must deal with its position of dominance and suppression of the Arab group, while the Arab group must deal with its internalization of its inferior position. In order to move forward, both groups must free themselves of the identities of oppressor and oppressed.

Despite these opportunities for change, it must be stated that among the Jewish participants there are those who reach the conclusion that although their behavior towards the Arab group is oppressive, the existing circumstances allow no alternative. Among the Arab group, there are participants (actually very few) who refuse to break free of the internalization of the oppression. However, in the majority of cases, the encounter proves highly meaningful for the participants. Though we have not adequately researched the results of this work, personal testimonies by the participants indicate that the encounters have brought them to change their lives and helped shape their social and political identities. It is our intention next year to conduct a major research evaluation that will focus on the specific question of identity change as a result of the encounter.

Challenges

We face two main challenges in our work. First, institutions such as schools often find our working approach too political, or even extreme. Usually encounter work is undertaken in order to bring the groups closer and create harmony between the Jews and the Arabs, without pausing to examine the status of the relations between them. Because of their reservations, we are obliged to work much harder to convince these institutions to take part in the encounters.

Second, our approach presents a serious challenge for our facilitation staff. As mentioned, our working method brings a release of much anger and frustration, together with manifestations of apparent extremism. I say "apparent" because the professional literature of group work identifies a stage of extremism as a necessary precursor to a positive change in identity and mutual acceptance among the participants. Although we are well aware of this, we sometimes find ourselves drawn into the despair and frustration felt by the participants. This feeling grows even stronger when we consider the dismal reality in which we live, where change, if it comes at all, may be in the wrong direction. We often feel helpless against the powers that shape this reality. Indeed, when the irresponsible act of a single person can have a stronger influence than a thousand encounters, one can begin to doubt the effectiveness of this educational work.

Part IV: Media

Chapter 11

Bosnia: Searching for Common Ground on Radio

by
Sheldon
Himelfarb

In August 1996, Common Ground Productions (CGP), the media arm of Search for Common Ground, received support from the United States Institute of Peace to produce an innovative series, *Resolutions Radio,* for Bosnian radio. Today the show continues to air weekly, broadcasting nationally from Sarajevo on Radio FERN, the Free Elections Radio Network created by OSCE. The program has also spawned a similar weekly series for discussing women's issues—*Jednostavno Zena (Simply Women)* which is produced locally in six different venues across Bosnia (Tuzla, Mostar East, Mostar West, Banja Luka, Bihac, and Sarajevo).

Resolutions Radio was the idea of producer Kenneth Clark, who saw it as an opportunity to combat the nationalistic hate and vitriol endemic to Bosnia's media during and after the war. The concept was stunningly simple: take a number of techniques used in conflict resolution and build them into a call-in talk radio format. The result is a program that uses hosts trained in conflict resolution; emphasizes guest line-ups that represent multiple sides of the issue at hand; and pursues the twin goals of generating positive options for action and creating a "safe" place for Bosnians of all ethnic groups, guests and audience alike, to interact honestly and respectfully.

It is difficult, under the best circumstances, to evaluate the impact of a media intervention such as this, which is designed for peace-building purposes. Conditions in Bosnia—where the demography is in flux, mistrust is epidemic, and media polling is rudimentary—make accurate impact evaluation extremely costly if not downright impossible. We have, however, had a number of successes and setbacks over the last year from which interesting lessons can be gleaned about the use of media in Bosnia's conflict, if not in conflict generally. The potential power of this kind of programming, for example, was well-illustrated during a special broadcast of *Resolutions Radio* from the Hotel Ero in the divided Croat-Muslim city of Mostar. With the support of the OSCE regional office we gathered editors and journalists from ten media outlets to participate in a live conversation about the state of the media in Mostar. They arrived reticent and suspicious; they left the program having agreed to hold weekly joint press conferences, and remained engaged in issues-oriented conversation well after the show was off the air. Such dialogue among these hardened journalists was unprecedented in the post-war period, according to OSCE staff and observers, and the success was such that we were immediately requested to expand our local program, *Jednostavno Zena,* to Mostar as well.

We have also experienced great success in the trainings we've held. Our project in Bosnia (as in other countries like Liberia and Burundi where CGP works) relies upon local talent: journalists, hosts, engineers, producers, and others. Every one of them receives some conflict resolution training and virtually every one of them has been grateful, if not fundamentally changed, for it.

The training sessions are multi-ethnic events at which participants are taught to recognize and analyze patterns of conflict; to ask probing questions in a non-partisan, productive manner; and to listen with sensitivity. As one journalist participant wrote, "After this workshop I will analyze different things with a whole new attitude. That means I'm going to consider the needs and wishes of each party to the conflict." Another Bosnian participant commented that she didn't anticipate the level of camaraderie and personal bonding with members of other ethnic groups. These are the people—most of them young and yet veterans of the war—who are the foundation of a better Bosnia. Today, many of them continue to work with us in the cities where we operate, establishing a network of journalists with a common ground agenda, as opposed to the nationalistic one demanded by most Bosnian media outlets.

In both of these highlights from our first year—the widely-applauded Mostar media show and the successful trainings—CGP worked closely with OSCE regional offices to identify key participants. And in both cases our OSCE friends were just as excited and pleased as we were with the results. Although no one can quote statistics or empirical evidence to indicate that new violence was averted or new democracy was nurtured, there was a palpable sense among all concerned that both of these things had, in fact, been achieved. Peace and democracy had been served; the importance of media in any peacebuilding strategy for Bosnia was affirmed.

What has also been affirmed, however, is that a media strategy is only as good as the understanding of local media habits which underpins it. It is, we have learned the hard way, easy to get it wrong. Take the simple notion of presenting multi-ethnic perspectives which is so central to the *Resolutions Radio* format, yet so difficult to achieve in Bosnia. Our presence on a network reaching the entire country, Radio FERN, demanded that our guests represent the three major ethnic groups. But we were broadcasting from a city dominated by one ethnic group—Sarajevo, which is predominantly Muslim. Guests from other ethnic areas were concerned about their safety and, at the last minute, often did not come. We would arrange escorts for them, but that wasn't sufficient. In the end, we were left with too many programs where the lineup lacked balance, and our credibility as a neutral party was at risk.

Elsewhere, one might have dealt with this problem by simply connecting guests by phone from the safety of their respective territories. But until recently it was impossible to have reliable phone communication between the Federation and the Republic of Srbska. So, as an alternative, we sought funding to establish the previously mentioned network of journalists around the country, who could feed interviews and "man on the street" reports into the programs.

Our failure to fully comprehend the complexities of a multi-ethnic radio format mirrors our failure—and the failure of the international community—to appreciate the complexities of Bosnian national listening habits. For all the millions of dollars poured

into Radio FERN and all its effort to use Bosnian talent and programming, FERN has never shed the label of "that foreigner's network"—a moniker that probably hampered our efforts and limited our impact. Call-in for *Resolutions Radio* is usually less dynamic than what we attract with our locally produced programs, despite FERN's national reach and our efforts to use some very popular on-air personalities. Yet for a long time we concentrated our efforts upon FERN, attributing the lack of audience response to transmitter and other politico-technical problems. (FERN's signal was jammed, for example, in the Banja Luka area by Radio Svjeti Jovan, a station operated by the daughter of Serb leader Momolo Krajicnik. And in Bihac and Mostar we were told by some that FERN's troubled transmitters had been vandalized, and by others that it was a maintenance problem.)

The experience of CGP, working with our local Bosnian partner, InterMedia Productions, to produce *Resolutions Radio* and *Jednostavno Zena* is an interesting study in the contrast and complement of NGO and large intergovernmental approaches to media and conflict. At the time we were launching this modest effort with $36,000 in seed money from the U.S. Institute of Peace, the international community was pouring unprecedented millions into other, grander efforts to transform the media in Bosnia. Radio FERN was following on the heels of Radio Brod, the EU's one year, $5 million effort to create an independent radio station on a ship in the Adriatic, which folded in 1994. FERN was launched with a budget of about $1.5 million, while that same year independent television in Bosnia got an infusion of $10.5 million from the international community through the creation of TV-IN.

Yet by the spring of 1996, there was widespread concern with the poor results of this massive expenditure. A widely respected nonpartisan, London-based organization, the International Crisis Group (ICG), issued a report criticizing the intergovernmental efforts and called for a revamping of the media strategy in Bosnia. They described the international community's media approach as "unimaginative at best" due to "a lack of overall strategy and absence of expertise."[7] The report continues, "Instead of analyzing the Bosnian media in detail, then working out a long-term approach to help improve it and combining forces to implement such a policy, donors have for the most part done their own thing." ICG recommended, among other things, that media efforts focus on quality and not quantity, effective and informed journalism training, and investment in programming that is locally produced.

Our own experience in Bosnia certainly bears this out. Our nationally oriented, FERN-based programming seems to have paid fewer dividends, for the most part, than our locally based programming and we have shifted our focus. Unfortunately this kind of locally based effort is more expensive to administer, at a time when finding financial support for using media in the Bosnian conflict is more difficult than ever due to donor fatigue over the first few years of excessive expenditure with so little to show for it.

The lesson seems clear and important: Whether spending millions or thousands, it is absolutely vital to have a solid understanding of the target audience and, in particular, its listening habits. Radio can be an extremely cost-effective way to reach millions of people in conflict or post-conflict situations. But using radio successfully can be less a matter of dollars than of sense.

Part V: Development for Peace

Chapter 12

NGOs Creating a Foundation for Peace and Democracy in Bosnia-Hercegovina

Since the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords we have witnessed a frenzy of national and local elections in the successor states of the former Yugoslavia geared towards injecting a patina of democratic accountability into the policies and actions of those who rule. From the formerly Serb-held parts of Croatia across fractured Bosnia-Hercegovina to the truncated Yugoslavia of Serbia and Montenegro, free and fair elections, it is hoped, can set a new tone of political debate that, undergirded by massive economic assistance and the stabilizing presence of NATO forces, concentrates more on peaceful political reconciliation and national reconstruction.

It is nevertheless understood that elections and top-down efforts to promote democratic change are in themselves insufficient and must be complemented by grassroots level democracy and peace-building. As one local businessman noted, "People in the region continue to suffer from a communist software in the brain." This patrimony of political intolerance clearly reveals itself in the region's undemocratic institutions, which tend to centralize power into a few hands and are viewed as normative instruments of political control. As a result, "democratic" elections can legitimize a winner-take-all approach to governance. In Bosnia-Hercegovina, where an obsession with political centralization is expressed along ethnic lines, elections can become a means not to reconcile differences but to solidify them.

Given the ethnic politicization of Bosnia-Hercegovina, every issue and decision becomes trapped in the larger national arena of political rivalries, even in those places that can still boast a multi-ethnic community. At the local level this often translates into government inaction and gridlock where nonpolitical issues, such as fixing water lines and local economic development, are held hostage by larger, unrelated political battles.

The international community indeed has labored to couple top-down democratic reform with substantial support to grassroots civic initiatives that can provide ways of getting around stultifying political divisions and meeting the numerous demands of physical and social reconstruction. These NGOs have become fora where citizens, regardless of their political, ethnic, or religious affiliation, can assemble and freely express their views and address community needs in an environment of cooperation. Though much of this activity has emerged spontaneously in Bosnia-Hercegovina, it has been stunted outside the more urban areas of Sarajevo, Tuzla, and Banja Luka. Yet it is in the provincial

by
Max Primorac

areas where tensions run highest, ethno-political divisions are deepest, and where peace and conflict hang in the balance.

Historical political inertia and the utter absence of a civic culture, as well as the deep unhealed wounds and suspicions left behind by ethnic cleansing, have made it difficult for those within these critical communities to translate into action even the most sincere wishes to restore fragile social bonds. Though the need for supporting civic initiatives in these areas is clear, what is less clear is how to do it. The Center for Civil Society in South-eastern Europe's USIP-sponsored effort over the past three years to create such initiatives in Livno and Travnik—two front-line communities which have maintained their multi-ethnic character, albeit under great stress—illustrates a workable approach.

▶ *Sourcing from within the community.* In establishing the Centers for Civic Cooperation we first sought to identify and work through legitimate community (civic and religious) leaders, those who command respect from all social sectors, including local governmental authorities. Forging links with recognized community leaders through their participation on each Center's Advisory Board helped to allay suspicions that inexorably accompany any nongovernmental (seen initially as anti-governmental) initiative, especially if it is foreign-sponsored.

▶ *Building cooperative relationships with local authorities.* We also sought to avoid antagonizing local authorities, instead trying to provide them with opportunities to appreciate the important contributions that NGOs can make in a society. The Livno Center successfully collaborates with the municipality on a variety of projects, including the installation of central heating units at the local high school. Maintaining cordial relationships throughout the community permits the Centers to work actively with numerous local institutions and affords disenfranchised minorities the chance to influence these institutions. Center advisors are proving adept at ascertaining what local activities are realizable, while they also serve as trusted bridges between the Centers and otherwise skeptical and weary communities.

▶ *Civic cooperation over ethnic reconciliation.* Given the political resonances that attempts at interethnic reconciliation set off throughout the country, we found it wise to focus Center activities on meeting the concrete needs of the community as a whole and deliberately chose not to belabor its interethnic character. We counted on the interethnic staff and the specially designed administrative practices of the Centers to ensure that inter- and intra-ethnic reconciliation would be a natural by-product of the organization's work. The Centers' focus on community, not ethnic, needs, would gradually help to shift the local socio-political discourse away from strictly political and ethnic terms.

▶ *Serving as a local civic structure for international assistance.* A major obstacle to encouraging broad community participation in an NGO's activities is overcoming the inertia that plagues communities habituated to a political system that demands obedience and discourages, even punishes, private initiative. The Centers' ability to provide tangible assistance with people's daily lives was critical if the Centers were to earn the trust of the community. Moreover, international agencies are given

opportunities to channel their help in a way that can promote the development of local civic infrastructure and avoid the gridlock that often blocks implementation of their projects. Serving as local partners for international assistance and reconstruction projects can actually empower citizens to participate in the rebuilding of their community.

▶ *Crucibles of civic education.* Such initiatives as the Centers for Civic Cooperation in Livno and Travnik are living examples of the healthy balance that can exist between the state and individual citizens and how such nongovernmental initiatives need not be anti-governmental in nature. Civic participation through NGOs provides the vehicles through which concepts of civic responsibility can have concrete meaning for those struggling to rebuild civil society.

Yet what will determine the success or failure of the Centers and other similar civic initiatives is how well these admittedly foreign plants can take root locally and grow into authentic indigenous institutions that desist from the sort of behavior and attitudes that lead to confrontation and exclusionism. In this regard, extensive training of Center staff has emphasized both interpersonal skills and a language of communication that is sorely absent in the region, as well as developing the administrative and programmatic skills needed to effectively manage civic organizations and tap into the good will and resources that exist within a community.

Throughout Bosnia-Hercegovina, however, NGOs are having difficulty in weaning themselves from international support and focusing their attention less on pre-determined projects designed outside and more on locally designed projects that require little money, draw upon greater community participation, and find their logic within the community. For their part, international agencies have sometimes imposed their ideas on desperate NGOs through the allure of big projects, high salaries, and the prestige of association. In many cases, foreign-sponsored NGOs boast the highest paid staff in the area. And often, international agencies struggling to fulfill their mandates are too quick to fund unscrutinized civic initiatives. The example of the international funding of a newspaper started by war criminal General Ratko Mladic's spokesperson only discredits other internationally sponsored peacemaking efforts. Together the wrong set of incentives are created, and the wrong message sent, to those engaging in civic initiatives, and it presents an image of NGOs as the extension of international interests and not as the basic medium for self-sustainable democratic development.

Local NGOs must also avoid being pulled into national debates that really have little direct impact on encouraging broader, community-level participation in their work. They must avoid becoming branches of international agendas and truly reflect the needs of their specific communities. Both Centers find it difficult to refuse international aid that does not conform to their organizational mission. The example of Croatia's Anti-War Campaign, which often rejects offers of generous foreign support if it fails to meet their very definite objectives, should be the model for Bosnia's NGO community to follow. Unless the international community refocuses its energies on indigenizing the country's many civic organizations, NGOs will fail to sustain themselves and fail to act as agents of positive change in a country remaining deeply polarized along political and ethnic lines.

Notes

1. Louise Diamond and John MacDonald, *Multi-track Diplomacy: A Systems Approach to Peace,* 3rd ed. (Kumarian Press, 1996).

2. Herbert Kelman, "The Interactive Problem-Solving Approach," *Managing Global Chaos* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Institute of Peace, 1996) pp. 501-20.

3. Eileen Babbitt, "Contributions of Training to International Conflict," *Peacemaking in International Conflict: Methods and Techniques,* I. William Zartman and J. Lewis Rasmussen, eds., (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Institute of Peace, 1997) pp. 365-388.

4. Jeffrey Rubin, Dean Pruitt, Sung Hee Kim, *Social Conflict: Escalation, Stalemate, and Settlement,* 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw Hill, 1994).

5. USIP did not fund the colloquia organized by St. Egidio on Algeria, but an Institute grant supported St. Egidio's analysis and evaluation of this Algerian project.

6. The confidentiality necessary for this project prevents public disclosure of the identity of participants and details of our contacts with the government and LTTE.

7. International Crisis Group, *Media in Bosnia and Hercegovina: How International Support Can be More Effective,* March 7, 1996, p. 9.

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