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STATE OF THE ART

Resilience as a Peacebuilding Practice: To Realism from Idealism

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The concept of resilience has been adopted extensively by colleagues in the fields of humanitarian and development assistance to better integrate their work and to make it more sustainable. More recently, researchers and practitioners in the fields of peacebuilding and conflict resolution have begun to test the utility of the concept for their work.[1] With an emphasis on the strength and capabilities of local communities, prevention planning and early warning, and focus on risk and community response, the concept of resilience is gaining sway in the peacebuilding community. There is a growing sense that strengthening communities' capacity to overcome violent shocks opens up new possibilities both for conflict prevention and for more sustainable post-conflict community recovery. Resilience offers a results based evaluative framework where the end result—the ability of a community to opt out of or prevent the escalation of violence—is the most effective measure of peacebuilding work.

The resonance of resilience thinking also lies with its ability to address chronic weaknesses in current intervention models, such as the realization that recent interventions have overlooked and undercut host nation capacity and that knowledge of the local environment is a key variable for conflict prevention and recovery. The traditional intervention model that pushes available and predetermined programming provides topical assistance rather than addressing the underlying root causes of conflict. Numerous peacebuilding events and studies on resilience highlight the current "buzz", yet also raise key questions: Is resilience a concept du jour or a credible framework for evaluating and organizing peacebuilding work? Is the peacebuilding field rushing to embrace resilience programming without a thoughtful methodology and the conceptual clarity needed for operationalizing resilience? The critical factor for resilience to be an effective model of peacebuilding practice is a clear-eyed understanding of the relationship between violence and community resilience, which drives

fundamental change in the structure and organization of how the field plans, programs and measures its work.

Resilience Thinking: A Logical Successor

The experiences of the last decade of war have provided some hard-won lessons, many of which point to the utility of resilience as a conceptual framework for peacebuilding work. "Whole of community" and "stabilization and reconstruction," in the end, did not provide enduring frameworks for working with conflict societies. Stabilization approaches often entrenched conflict drivers and preserved cultures of conflict. Reconstruction efforts focused literally on the physical reconstruction of a community or region. Large-scale infrastructure projects blossomed while the need for the social connective "tissue" to embed these new schools, wells and police academies into community life was largely ignored, as were efforts at social reconstruction or the changes in norms and thinking that must happen to return a society to peace. "Whole of community" approaches tried to coordinate the multiplicity of international intervening institutions by valuing and understanding the utility of each other's institutional approaches and perspectives. However, their coordination was largely defined by their own institutional drivers, rather than local community needs and conflict causes.

Resilience thinking provides an important heuristic shift. The focus moves from the role of externally directed institutions that achieve security equilibrium for peace to take root. In its place, resilience thinking acknowledges that conflict societies are in a constant state of flux and embrace various adaptive strategies in preventing and managing violence. This conceptual conversion substantiates the important role of local knowledge in understanding the roots and triggers of violent conflict and inspires and respects community innovation and learning, strategic leadership and collective (inclusive) action. It not only opens up space for engaging with local communities, it makes them the focal point. Resilience thinking embraces complexity while recognizing that even "small" community-level conflicts have historical, cultural, political and social overlays through which members perceive and respond to both the possibility and reality of violence. These social feedback loops can negatively reinforce harmful perceptions and prejudices dividing a society—or they can be conduits for adaptive change,

> Is resilience a concept du jour, or a credible framework for evaluating and organizing peacebuilding work?

as described in Ami Carpenter's article on sectarianism in Iraq, "Havens in a Firestorm: Perspectives from Baghdad on Resilience to Sectarian Violence," where communities acted intentionally to prevent the breakdown of norms and relationships and maintain normal societal functions, like providing for one's family and sending children to school.[2]

A Call to Action

We have to accept that resilience thinking, while conceptually promising, is in an initial, surface phase. Part of the appeal of resilience for the peacebuilding field right now is that it appears intuitively obvious and relatively easy to implement: Instead of heavy-handed, protracted and costly interventions, conflict prevention and recovery is a matter of activating latent or supporting functioning capacity in a community. However, as Ken Menkhaus has noted, if resilience does not drive thoughtful change in practice, it is nothing more than an intriguing concept under which institutions can park their usual work and claim it as something new.[3] Below are some considerations for advancing resilience as a promising and evolutionary model of practice for the peacebuilding field.

Establish resilience as a legitimate and useful model of practice for the peacebuilding field by implementing an empirical research agenda that articulates the underlying factors of a community's resilience to particular forms of violence.

Part of the current resilience "vagueness" is an oversimplification of what resilience is. Early research on "bright spots" or communities that have opted out of or recovered from violence characterize resilience in general terms: dispersed, legitimate leadership; strong and continuous governance; the ability to conduct a cost-benefit analysis of participating in violence; decision making with a collective voice. This is a good first step but describes only the end state of resilience without a deeper understanding of the cultural, historical, social and structural mechanisms that underlie it. Resilience, as it relates to a community's ability to resist (opt out of) violence or recover from it, needs a more nuanced definition. Comparative work that analyzes community resilience to different types of violence is critical. A community that is resilient to electoral violence might, on the other hand, be vulnerable to natural resource conflict: How do we better understand capacity and risk and translate that into context-specific interventions? And how do we understand gradations of risk and resilience when a society is reaching its tipping point and its capacity to resist or recover is not commensurate to the level or duration of the violence?

Develop more nuanced understandings of community vulnerability to external factors to drive multidimensional strategies that not only build community capacity but also mitigate or prevent ex-

ternal shocks to which a community is particularly vulnerable.

Part of the innate appeal of community resilience is the incorporation of evolved thinking that the basis of any sustainable peace process is the capacity of a community to manage the dynamics causing violent conflict. At its best, this is an approach that seeks to enhance community responsibility rather than build a linkage of dependency on the international community. At its worst, however, focusing on resilience may be a shirking of the responsibility of the international community to ensure the necessary conditions of sustainability and security. Resilience thinking and practice may lead to excessive focus on one dimension of the problem—community capacity—without corresponding attention to external risk, including policies and interventions to mitigate the shock that erodes community capacity to manage violence. External shocks also come in many forms, including well-meaning attempts by external players, such as flooding a community with resources beyond its absorptive capacity, weakening the role of local influence and input and the ill-thought selection of local partners that results in political "winners" and "losers."

Approach the practice of resilience in peacebuiding with realistic expectations and a clear eye toward the political dynamics playing out within the affected community.

Community resilience cannot be idealized if practitioners are to avoid an inherent weakness of the peacebuilding profession. In a field that is often caricatured for its "pie in the sky" thinking about community peace and harmony, there has to be a hard recognition that the decisions and actions communities take to opt out of or recover from violence are imbued with power and politics. Communities will scope the options for resilience available to them through a particular cultural, social and political lens or because of the personal power and influence of those in the community proposing them. Communities may actively make decisions that secure the resilience of a particular group over another. Resilience practice must consider important questions about the role of power and culture in adaptive responses to violence, asking the question: Does the resilience of some community actors result in the vulnerability of others? Resilience is not a neat solution to an underlying weakness of the peacebuilding community. Building peace in a country or region is a deeply political, high-stakes endeavor. Yet to echo Seth Kaplan's blog post, "Where are the Development Political Scientists?," peacebuilders rarely come equipped with an understanding of the political power dynamics of a community and with a strategy for leveraging political power interests.[4]

> If resilience does not drive thoughtful change in practice, it is nothing more than an intriguing concept under which institutions can park their usual work.

Approach the practice of resilience with an awareness of the preconceptions external actors bring to any assessment of the problem.

One of the most promising and positive aspects of resilience thinking is the ways in which it has fundamentally shifted our values and thinking about conflict societies. It has challenged the terminology and semantics around conflict from a language of weakness, failure and fragility to a discussion of a community's innate strength, the power and value of its existing social ties and networks that have held communities together in the most venal conditions, and its adaptive capacity. While this shift will open new and promising avenues for engagement, there is always the danger of external judgments about what is positive and negative adaptation by a community. Is a community's use of a witch doctor to resolve community grievances a positive or negative adaptation? Where do authoritarian systems, which enforce stability and contain groups' propensity to violence, fit in the net balance of positive or negative resilience to violent conflict?

Conclusion

Resilience thinking represents a step forward in framing the discussions and solutions around violence and conflict and its impact on society by recognizing local norms and approaches to violence and a community's extensive experience with managing violence. However, it cannot be applied as an overly simplistic framework to every conflict situation. There are certain situations where the nature of the violence is structural and may not fit the resilience model, which emphasizes capacity building and interventions around an external shock. It should not be applied in situations where the shock is unfolding and communities have passed a tipping point that now requires a crisis intervention. There is a current tendency to back all conflict resolution approaches into the nomenclature of resilience. Above are suggestions for operationalizing resilience that move the field from resilience as a lofty concept to a peacebuilding model of practice. They require thoughtful debate. ■

STATE OF THE ART

The Resilience Approach to Peacebuilding: A New Conceptual Framework

BEATRICE POULIGNY, PH.D., INDEPENDENT RESEARCHER

The word "resilience" has become fashionable in the field of international assistance, lately extending to peacebuilding. From the 1950s, when the term made its way outside science and engineering, until a few years ago, it was implicitly associated with the field of individual psychology, and its application to state and society as a counterpoint to the notion of fragility was still raising some eyebrows. Today, some use the word as a mere metaphor, unaware of its multiple meanings across disciplines and of the promising framework that it could provide for peacebuilding if used more precisely. Some peacebuilding scholars and practitioners alike now feel that adoption of the concept has done more harm than good and remain suspicious that "resilience" is being used as little more than a fashionable buzzword.

The notion of resilience, if taken seriously, can be useful in the peacebuilding field, both for analysis and for practice. This article intends to make that case. First, we arrive at a cogent definition of "societal resilience"; then we examine what constitutes a resilient social system; and finally, we explore how to apply the resilience framework as a guiding tool in peacebuilding. The resilience framework offers a concrete basis that could guide further empirical research. But this will first require rigorous development as well as field-testing. Empirically based research is needed. Only then can the framework present an added value to our work as peacebuilders and to the communities we work with.

Defining "Societal Resilience"

The word "resilience" has a long and diverse history across disciplines. There is now a plethora of literature on resilience, especially regarding the personas of individuals (particularly children); the properties of metals, plastics, fabrics and yarns; the integrity of ecological and environmental systems; and the ability of communities to address disaster risks and adapt to climate change.

Given the collective impact of traumas generated by violent conflicts, and the increasing importance of psychosocial well-being in the peacebuilding agenda, developmental psychology and social work offer important insights for peacebuilding. In that context, "resilience" refers to an individual's capacity to adapt, survive and bounce back during or after hardship and adversity. The natural sciences offer relevant lessons as well, defining "resilience" as the ability of a system to adjust to a perturbation and maintain its core functions. These fields consider outside shocks that have nothing to do with interpersonal violence, yet they present many processes analogous to the mechanisms for societal recovery.

The capacity to adapt and, therefore, undergo some change in the process is a distinctive feature of the notion of resilience.

Building on the parallels in those fields, the notion of societal resilience can be used in the peacebuilding context to refer to the capacity of a group, community or society at large to cope with stresses and disturbances as a result of social, political and environmental change and to adjust while still retaining essentially the same functions and feedbacks by the people. In this definition, societal resilience has three key characteristics:

It is an inherently dynamic concept. The capacity to adapt and, therefore, undergo some change in the process is a distinctive feature of the notion of resilience. The resilience of a system is assessed based on its functions and its capacity to perform, not on its stability. This is an important characteristic since, particularly in post-conflict contexts, the notion of "stabilization"—although strongly criticized—remains tempting for international decision makers. Indeed, beyond the objective of reducing the level of violence, experience in recent decades has demonstrated the

real risks of underestimating the inherently dynamic nature of conflict transformation processes. Similarly, discourses too often refer to the idea of "restoring" or "returning to" something associated with the status quo before the violent conflict, or even "repairing" what has been broken or destroyed. But violence transforms as much as it destroys. It creates new realities and forms of relationships, particularly when it has lasted for decades. International aid programs themselves induce additional transformations. These nonlinear evolutions need to be fully considered when thinking in terms of resilience.

It is based on risks versus opportunities. Psychiatric research on individual resilience has suggested a framework of risk versus opportunity (or protective) factors. This framework is used specifically to describe the mixture of fragility and resilience seen among children living in difficult (in particular, violent) situations where they are exposed to multiple risk factors. The individual well-being of those children depends not on everything becoming perfect in their world but on the presence of protective factors to counterbalance the risk factors. The framework provides a dynamic concept of vulnerability and resilience, and it accounts for how two individuals who have experienced similar life-threatening events may have very different reactions and trajectories. Similarly, a community's collective well-being depends on the balance between its different sources of fragility and its counterbalancing resources. Such a dual assessment is essential for peacebuilding. Yes, violent conflicts have mid- to long-term effects that may durably affect the very social, political, economic and cultural fabric of a society, and those effects may imply serious risks of reverting to confrontation. But the story does not end here. Every society also has resources that could counterbalance those risks if those resources are correctly identified, supported and mobilized.

It has coping strategies that reach beyond mere survival. Coping mechanisms often contain the seeds of resilience, especially when they manifest the emergence of some form of regularized social interaction. Life continues during the violence. Women go back to sell their goods the day after the market has been bombed. The exchange of goods and information continues between neighborhoods affected by violence. This not only helps people survive and cope with violence and its consequences but also fosters the maintenance (or even creation) of social networks. To that extent, survival strategies may pave the way to resilience. But alone, they are not sufficient. Something needs to help gradually transform the situation that people are in. Survival strategies also may become maladaptive during the peacebuilding phase—for instance, if they do not go beyond the boundaries of the community or group and if they perpetuate a sense of mistrust.

The recovery requires acknowledgment of individual suffering and narratives, as well as a collective recognition and validation of the traumas inflicted.

Assessing the Key Components of a Resilient Societal System

While resilience may take many forms, some functions seem to be central in supporting the ability of a community or a society at large to develop and sustain its resilience. Using the existing literature across disciplines, together with a comparative analysis of indigenous resilience mechanisms documented in conflict and post-conflict environments, in many different cultural and sociopolitical contexts, we find five core functions of community-level resilience:

Psychosocial recovery of individuals and communities. While this theme is only slowly becoming part of the mainstream peacebuilding agenda, indigenous mechanisms always integrate some forms of healing, which shows the importance that communities generally ascribe to traumas resulting from violent conflicts. The recovery requires acknowledgment of individual suffering and narratives, as well as a collective recognition and validation of the traumas inflicted. (This is crucial for the most vulnerable segments of the population as well as for the individuals stigmatized as a result of the violence.)

Shared systems of meaning. The symbolic, imaginary and even spiritual dimensions of the transition from war to peace are essential in the adaptations that a community needs to make in order to become resilient. Peacebuilding needs to happen at least as much in people's minds as in their outer reality. Communities showing signs of resilience are those that have addressed these dimensions, in particular through rituals that help reframe the issues at stake and allow people to approach problems in new ways, creating meaning.

Solidarity among community members and appropriate distribution of resources, services and rights. This refers to community building not as some utopian or communitarian goal, but community as it really is: social groups engaging in some sort of social life and progressively sharing some resources and services. Paying attention to

how the existing networks are mobilized and reconfigured is an important aspect of that work. So is the actual delivery of concrete resources, services and rights (such as water and food, health services, education and security) to the community members.

Community reintegration and trust. The mere cohabitation and collaboration that allow a group of people to go on with their lives, although essential, are not enough for a community to become resilient. Indeed, true resilience requires a redefining of the collective rules, some form of reacceptance of those rules (via a new social contract) and, many times, the peaceful coexistence of former antagonists. This dynamic returns a sense of safety and predictability in what an individual can expect from the community and in what the community can expect from the individual. This supposes, among other things, the re-creation of mutual trust, and penalization for wrongdoing, which is the way communities handle the justice component of addressing past wounds (as a complement to psychosocial recovery).

Broad and inclusive forms of governance. The system also needs to support the community's governance, however its members define this, and offer different forms of feedback by the people who are part of that collectivity. The mechanisms here also include institutional capacities for resolving the problems between members, and the conflicts that may arise from day to day, and for absorbing shock and preventing further violence. Needless to say, this also requires the system to address old grievances that may be the source of new emerging conflicts.

Applying the Resilience Framework as a Guiding Tool for Peacebuilding

Resilience is a multifaceted concept that shows promise because it encourages both researchers and practitioners to understand the dynamic mix of fragility and resilience present in societies that must cope with violent conflict. Ultimately, societal resilience depends on a balance of risk and opportunity factors. These are culturally constructed; they rest as much on subjective meanings as on external events. That is, two communities may experience situations that are very similar from an outsider's point of view. But what counts is how, subjectively, they feel it and explain it. In that sense, the notion of resilience is adaptable to various contexts but in different ways.

Resilience offers a promising way to address the more intangible dimensions of peacebuilding.

The framework suggested in this article—to conceptualize the notion of resilience—still needs further testing. At this stage, it should be considered as a series of entry points, both to assess existing resources and capacities in any given peacebuilding context (in particular, the forms of endogenous resilience mechanisms) and to measure, through the life cycle of any peacebuilding project, its actual contribution to supporting local resilience.

Resilience is a long-term process. But there is a real risk of hobbling the community's ability to become resilient if the factors that support the shift from day-to-day survival to "bouncing back" to long-term resilience are not integrated from the outset. If it is to be taken seriously, resilience cannot be postponed to a distant future; it has to be supported from day one of any peacebuilding project, even in the most adverse circumstances. This is also a good reminder for the peacebuilding community to go beyond the impression of "vacuum" or "anarchy" often attributed to situations of fragility. Finally, resilience offers a promising way to address the more intangible dimensions of peacebuilding—an area where both our analysis and our practice remain weak.■

PEACE ARENA

Theory vs. Practice

In each Newsletter, the Peace Arena offers a space for discussion between scholars and practitioners as they comment on a selected quote. This week we feature: Jon Kurtz, Director of Research and Learning, Mercy Corps AND Jason Calder, Independent Consultant. The selected quote comes from Dr. Kenneth Menkhaus, Professor at the Political Science Department of Davidson College, who wrote in "Making Sense of Resilience in Peacebuilding Contexts: Approaches, Applications, Implications":

"Resilience is…slippery to define, and … susceptible to the political economy of re-branding, as various actors scramble to ensure that their programmes hit all the right notes in order to secure funding in a field that seems exceptionally susceptible to new trends and buzzwords."

BY JON KURTZ

What are you doing differently since adopting a resilience approach? I've begun posing this question to challenge the widespread repackaging of existing efforts as resilience building. One fundamental implication is that resilience forces programs to put risks, shocks and stressors more central to their strategies. People working on conflict tend to get this. However, the peacebuilding field is still susceptible to 'resilience mimicry,' owing mainly to insufficient conceptual clarity on the relationship between violent conflict and resilience.

Perspectives on resilience among peacebuilding experts commonly emphasize the capacity to prevent, mitigate and resolve conflict. This focus on reducing the likelihood or severity of shocks is important. However, by placing conflict reduction as the end goal, this view risks relabeling peacebuilding work as resilience building. In contrast, the latest thinking among development actors stresses resilience as the capacity to maintain development outcomes—such as food security or psychosocial well-being—in the face of shocks. This perspective also has limitations; notably it may leave the causes of violence and vulnerability unattended.

An alternative approach adopted by Mercy Corps bridges these two views by examining how effective conflict management can strengthen resilience to the causes and consequences of climatic, economic or political shocks. Our research across the greater Horn of Africa indicates that resilience and peace share common roots. In Somalia, expanded social networks and community cohesion underpin both. During the 2011 crisis, families with greater social and economic interaction across clan lines maintained, or more quickly rebuilt, food security.

BY JASON CALDER

Dr. Menkhaus's concerns are valid. With the help of good research, our community will eventually fashion workable definitions and plausible approaches to building resilience. However, our ability to operationalize them under a results-based aid system that militates against the kind of long-term, contextualized and locally-responsive interventions that a resilience approach requires will be the greater obstacle to success.

For peacebuilding, resilience revolves around communities and groups preventing, mediating and constructively managing conflict in their midst. The reality is that communities do this all the time, but international outsiders rarely take time to observe or understand these dynamics. We need to find the resilience that exists, consider new ways to spread effective practices and avoid instrumentalizing them for our own purposes. I have a few suggestions to consider.

The field of public health provides one method of identifying cases of resilience, which is to find the successful outliers, also called "positive deviants," and seek a contextualized understanding of their achievements. Mary Anderson and Marshall Wallace essentially do this in *Opting Out of War*, where they chronicled the stories of communities that demonstrated diverse ways of exempting themselves from the violence around them, from flexibly employing ethnic identities to create safe space to sophisticated negotiating strategies with belligerents.

Once these resilient communities are located, the question becomes how to proceed. It is very difficult for outside NGOs to capture the nuance, trial and error, and perseverance that went

Jon Kurtz, Cont.

Conflict management can also enhance resilience to natural disasters. In Ethiopia, peacebuilding programs built trust between conflicting groups and increased freedom of movement. The greater access to distant pastures enabled communities to better manage the 2011 drought. However, not all approaches to conflict management contribute to resilience. In Uganda's Karamoja region, government policies for addressing insecurity may be undermining long-term resilience. Forced disarmament and settlement of pastoralists had curtailed their ability to migrate with livestock—a vital coping strategy during drought.

Greater engagement of the peacebuilding field is required to advance the resilience agenda in fragile and conflict-affected states, where the biggest investments in resilience are being made. But to add value, peacebuilding actors must bring two qualities: the awareness that some things in their toolkit will have greater efficacy in impacting resilience than others and a commitment to figuring out the conceptual and programmatic differences between resilience and peacebuilding.

Jason Calder's response to Jon Kurtz

Implicit in Jon Kurtz's challenge is that while capacity building ("what we NGOs do") may be important to building resilience, it does not automatically follow that everything we do builds resilience—an important distinction that donors and researchers have a role in calling out. Nevertheless, humanitarians, peacebuilders and development practitioners will seek different manifestations of resilience and bring different lenses to the concept. On balance, different contexts or situations—indeed different local communities in harm's way—may privilege different priorities. What is more important now is for scholars and practitioners to adopt an ecumenical approach that allows us to see how a wide range of factors—social, economic, political, cultural, environmental and historical—come together to create resilience to specific shocks in specific contexts. Jon's examples help do this. The challenge will be to understand the dynamics at play and correctly interpret their implications for what external actors can and cannot do to build resilience. ■

Jason Calder, Cont.

into community strategies and to translate them into universal programs. Greater use of community-to-community contact and dialogue can help here. Allowing communities to process the positive experience of others into their own practices can be a more effective learning strategy while building solidarity and cross-communal ties.

International actors must avoid instrumentalizing communal resilience for their own purposes. In creating local police forces in Afghanistan, the U.S. military sought to build on the historic resilience of Afghan tribal communities for self-protection. Instead, in places like Wardak Province, the military used these local protection groups in offensive counterinsurgency operations. The effort failed and was abandoned after considerable cost in lives, resources and trust.

Resilience can hold promise by supporting the organic development of new political and social bargains among groups emerging from complex emergencies and conflict, but those entities funding resilience-based approaches will need to realign their funding and incentives to avoid a rush to rebranding.

Jon Kurtz's response to Jason Calder

Jason Calder rightly identifies the risks of instrumentalizing resilience. One of the most worrisome forms I see this taking is in the U.S. government's countering violent extremism (CVE) strategy. While community-based approaches may be important for CVE, referring to this as building community resilience distorts the concept in a way that jeopardizes its potential to transform how development and humanitarian agencies work. 'Resistance' is a more appropriate term when the aim is reducing vulnerability to radicalization—or other short-term goals. Whereas resilience, as defined by major aid agencies, is inherently about safeguarding the long-term development prospects and well-being of communities at risk of conflict and other crises. This distinction underscores the need to be clear about what exactly we are striving to build resilience to. It also highlights the importance of pushing back when resilience is co-opted for instrumental purposes. The voices of peacebuilding actors would be much welcomed in this effort. ■

IN PRACTICE

Resilience and Conflict Prevention in West Darfur

LUCY V. MOORE, SENIOR POLICY ADVISER, ISLAMIC RELIEF WORLDWIDE

Armed conflict in Western Darfur has destroyed basic infrastructure, leaving communities without access to essential services. Violence may occur at any time—weapons continue to circulate and are easily accessible. In the context of a decadelong 'state of emergency,' people survive in continued localized conflicts: Tensions, particularly between internally displaced persons (IDPs) and host communities, arise over access to water, grazing land and health services. Tensions rise as the aid is limited to IDPs, despite host communities demonstrating the same needs.

Civil society actors, religious leaders, community elders and the media pursue a wide range of activities to increase community engagement and promote peace. New mechanisms for dispute resolution are less likely to have deep impact; disputes arising over water are referred to police adjudication, but this process does not reduce the number of reported incidents. The Peace and Community Conflict Resolution Project of Islamic Relief has rehabilitated local committee structures and expanded membership to all affected groups, focusing on shared Islamic faith and the 'familial' relationships that can inspire.

Throughout history, faith has provided an enduring motivation for behavioral transformation. Working with local faith communities offers a solid foundation for societal change in diverse contexts. Subcommittees now maintain water facilities and negotiate grazing routes between nomads and pastoralists. The number of disputes sharply reduced as a result, allowing close relationships to form between community members who would not have greeted each other previously. Disputes still arise given the layers of tension in Western Darfur. However, by creating legitimate mechanisms for mitigating the day-to-day competition for resources within the community, and building their capacity, Islamic Relief's programs offer the potential for community resilience to more complex and emerging conflicts that have the potential for violence.■

Camp Life, Kerinding Camp, West Darfur
Source: Islamic Relief

Resilience in Wajir and Kenya

KENNETH MENKHAUS, PROFESSOR, POLITICAL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT, DAVIDSON COLLEGE

Wajir, Kenya is the site of a remarkable case of local resilience in the face of powerful conflict drivers. In the mid-1990s, spillover from the Somali civil war produced dangerous levels of clan clashes and armed criminality across Somali-inhabited northern Kenya at a time when the Kenyan government had only a nominal presence there. In the town of Wajir, a lethal interclan clash erupted in the market. In response, the market women met and agreed to enforce a zone of peace in the market. That agreement seeded a wider set of governance arrangements, involving the women's peace group, elders, religious leaders, business figures and youth groups and helped keep the peace in the entire town. Critically, the appointed district commissioner saw this informal governance arrangement as an opportunity, not a threat, and actively worked to amplify its capacity. Within a few years, the agreement led to a "Peace and Development Committee," bringing peace and improved security across the entire district despite enduring problems of small arms flows, cross-border clashes and communal disputes over land and water. The committee even engaged in cross-border diplomacy with Somali communities inside Somalia.

Wajir district has had a few setbacks since the mid-1990s, including a recent violent communal clash over new county borders. But the community has demonstrated an impressive degree of resilience in the face of powerful conflict drivers in the wider region and is a testimony to the capacity for peace that committed local coalitions can generate. ■

Dekha Ibrahim, the late Somali peace activist, in Kenya
Source: Angi Yoder-Maina

NOTES

1. Alliance for Peacebuilding and USAID's Conflict and Fragility Working Group, Woodrow Wilson International Center's Working Group on Chronic Violence and Resilience, World Bank's Nairobi Center for Justice, Conflict and Rule of Law case studies on social convergence and institutional resilience in Alexandre Marc, Alys Willman, Ghazia Aslam and Michelle Robosio, *Societal Dynamics and Fragility: Engaging Societies in Responding to Fragile Situations*, (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2012).

2. Ami Carpenter. 2012. "Havens in a Firestorm: Perspectives from Baghdad on Resilience to Sectarian Violence." *Civil Wars Journal* 14 (2): 182-204.

3. Ken Menkhaus, *Making Sense of Resilience in Peacebuilding Contexts: Approaches, Applications, Implications*, Geneva Peacebuilding Platform, paper no. 6, (2012).

4. Seth Kaplan, "Where are the Development Political Scientists?," *Fragile States* Blog (2012), www.fragilestates.org/2012/08/14/where-are-the-development-political-scientists/.

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