NO FAILURE IN PEACE WORK

THE LIFE AND TEACHING OF DEKHA IBRAHIM ABDI

2ND EDITION

'*People have the tendency to start an initiative, want quick results, and if things don't work well in two months then they give up and say it has failed. For me there is no failure in peace initiatives. If something is not working it is an invitation for further work, reflection and learning. Peacework needs some risk-taking and exploring sincerely and learning from our mistakes.*'

– Dekha Ibrahim Abdi

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INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that Dekha Ibrahim Abdi made an extensive and profound contribution to ending violence and resolving conflicts in many corners of the world. Through her practice Dekha epitomised a well thought out philosophy of peacebuilding and conflict transformation. In part it was influenced by her deep faith in Islam, in part by those she met and worked with, and it was also her own unique way of seeing people and the contexts they live in. This book is a humble attempt to capture her theory and practice - a sort of Dekha Ibrahim Abdi 101 text book if you like!

At the time of her passing, Dekha Ibrahim Abdi, was the Chair of the Board of the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies. Like her friends and colleagues everywhere, we deeply grieved her absence. While we have included some tributes here, it is primarily an opportunity to reflect more deeply on a key peace builder in our time.

We appreciate so much those who have taken the time to put into writing all that Dekha taught them.

This is a second and enlarged edition, which contains new material from Marwan Darweish and Joan McGregor, remembering Dekha's work in Palestine and Israel, and a reflection on Dekha the woman peacebuilder by her dear South African colleague and friend Richard Smith. Another very special feature of this edition is the editing work done by Dekha's dear and eldest daughter Kaltuma Noor who interned at CPCS this past summer and currently studies conflict transformation at the Eastern Mennonite University. A powerful testament to Dekha's belief in inter-generational peacebuilding.

Books don't materialise without a commitment to detail and perfection. It is a thankless task, however CPCS extends heartfelt thanks for the voluntary contributions of Patricia DeBoer for meticulous and thoughtful editing, Sophie Ford for endless rounds of proof reading of the first edition and Bridget Walker for leading the work on the second edition. Together with our staff person Inanna Göbel-Bösch, your work has made a second volume possible.

Wherever you are on this beautiful planet, we trust that Dekha's ideas and inspiration enriches and informs your work for peace,

Emma Leslie
Executive Director
Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies

LEARNING FROM DEKHA: PEACEBUILDER AND TEACHER

DEKHA IBRAHIM ABDI: A LIFE DEDICATED TO PEACE

Ambassador Bethuel Kiplagat
September 2011

Historical Background of the Division of Somalia

Dekha was born in Wajir District in North Eastern Province of Kenya, bordering Somalia. Before Kenya's independence this region was known as the Northern Frontier District (NFD). The colonial boundary between Kenya and Italian Somaliland had divided the Somali people between the colonies and these are the territories of Djibouti, Italian Somaliland, British Somaliland and Ogaden in Ethiopia. This policy of divide and rule has been the cause of untold suffering to millions of people in this region and the social and political problems it generated have remained unresolved up to now.

This was indeed the environment in the early 1960s which Dekha was born into. Her birth coincided with the wind of change sweeping across Africa; the wind of independence. British Somaliland came first, followed immediately by Italian Somaliland and then Kenya. With independence, the Somalis saw an opportunity in the realisation of a dream to bring all the people of Somali origin under one government

and that was why British Somaliland and Italian Somaliland came together to form the Republic of Somalia. Kenya, Djibouti and Ogaden Somali intended to follow suit even if it meant achieving this through war. The newly created Somali Republic did indeed support a rebellion in North Eastern Province with the aim of separating from Kenya to join the Republic of Somalia. War erupted which lasted for five years and left two countries bitter enemies. A similar conflict erupted between Ethiopia and Somalia and remains unresolved fifty years on.

Historical Background of Kenya's Northern Frontier District

'Somalis did consider themselves of a superior race to Africans: the Bantus in Somalia consider themselves marginalized and oppressed.'

In Kenya, the Northern Frontier District was indeed a frontier because the whole area was part of the so-called "closed district". Anyone living outside this region needed a special pass to enter any closed district. This was like a restricted visa because the issuance of such a document was at the discretion of the Colonial District Commissioner. This policy, the fragmentation of the Somali people by the colonial powers, made the people living in NFD (as it was then called) feel different and separate.

The British not only applied the policy of separation concerning Somalis and other pastoralists, but also classified the races in Kenya into three broad categories namely: European, Asian and African. These races were placed in a hierarchical structure with the European at the top followed by Asian and African at the bottom. For unexplained reasons Somalis were placed under Asian, hence a notch above African. Somalis did not

object to the idea. If anything, it may have reinforced inherent extant prejudices which were already there. For indeed, Somalis did consider themselves of a superior race to Africans: the Bantus in Somalia consider themselves marginalized and oppressed.

Dekha's Identities

Dekha was not only born a Somali, both parents being Somalis, but more importantly a member of a specific clan among one of the Somali clans. There is very strong attachment to clanship, maybe even stronger than being a member of the Somali ethnic group. These clans have to compete for resources such as water, pasture and livestock. Livestock raiding is common across the clan lines and also conflicts over water and pasture.

Dekha, being a woman, had her special status determined by tradition. Though there was no pronounced classification like a caste system, the position of women was not on par with that of men. Marginalization and discrimination was to a large extent practised. This practice was reinforced by religion-Islam. Dekha was born into an Islamic community and an Islamic family. Religion played a very important role in the day to day life of Somali Muslims.

'What is it that prompted her to choose the unique unusual methodology of initiating the peace process through market women?'

Like all of us, Dekha carried with her multiple identities: she was ethnically Somali, belonged to a clan, was a Muslim and a woman. These identities in one way or another had a direct bearing on the work she later did for peace. These multiple identities could either facilitate or became an obstacle to her work.

Peace through Market Women

We may never know what factors prompted Dekha to take up the burden of trying to bring about reconciliation, understanding and peace among the clans in Wajir to begin with. What is it that prompted her to choose the unique unusual methodology of initiating the peace process through market women? This was indeed a stroke of initiative genius. Given the factors sighted above of identity and barriers to be surmounted, the market is the ideal place.

The African market has the sense of belonging; it is owned by the whole community - the young, the old, men, women and even strangers. It is open to all, and this is more so if it is an open air market as in the case of the Wajir market. The real owners of the market are the women. The market is a safe space in the community which facilitates opportunity for encounters. It is a point of exchange not only of goods but also of ideas and information especially as it relates to human security: impending drought, diseases (both human and livestock), famine, livestock raids and brewing tension which could lead to conflict. It is the safe space, which can enable communities to stop the vicious cycle of violence. It is a place of networking and bonding.

With all these positive characteristics of a market, why had other peace makers not thought of it? But Dekha did, and that was what I called her intuitive chance. This may not be the case in other cultures, but I believe there are many positive common elements which are conducive to initiating peace processes in an informal and non-threatening way. That is what Dekha did. I do not believe that she sat down and did this analysis as I have done, but it must have come naturally to her.

To the market she went, to start a process which would take her from the rural town of Wajir to the world. At the market she started with the women and that was natural being a woman. The market setting

eliminated the age barrier since she was young. When one comes to think of the approach she took, it is a stroke of genius. Women are pivotal when it comes to natural contact and accessibility throughout the community; therefore this placed her in an advantageous position when it came to passing information and influence. A woman can talk to all players across the board: elders, religious leaders, businessmen and youth. The market women being married had a natural access to religious leaders, elders, businessmen and youth, both boys and girls. This proved a great asset because they were in touch with the wider community.

'I do not believe that she sat down and did this analysis as I have done, but it must have come naturally to her.'

In the market Dekha did not do it alone. She mobilized others who were concerned like her, and together they worked through the market making contacts with all the key stakeholders. Their efforts bore fruit; they were able to bring all these key stakeholders together across the clan basis. Given the work the women must have done with their networks, the ground was well prepared for fruitful dialogue, which led to peace among the warring clans.

'Through their persistence, diplomatic efforts and sensitivity, all stakeholders finally came together, not so much around the table but under an acacia tree, to discuss peace.'

In order to seal whatever arrangements they made there was one other very important stakeholder to consider bringing in: the government. The most important responsibility of any government is to keep peace. Given the historical environment, security agencies had their handicap. They were there to keep the peace when there is peace, but this was not the case. The secessionist rebellion left its mark on the psyche of the security agencies, i.e. the administration, police, and military. The problem was further compounded by the fact that the majority of the leaders of these agencies were non-Somali and carried with them their prejudices as well as a not so positive attitude towards Somalis, who reciprocated in the same manner having been classified by the British as being in the Asiatic category.

Dekha was able to surmount this major obstacle.

At first, security agencies did not consider that civilians could play a role in matters related to peace and security. For them, force is the only option available to bring about and maintain peace. The idea of "self-power" was never in their training or an option. The approach of the key actors of the community in Wajir to bring the administration, the security and the community together was once again a major breakthrough in peace-making at that time. Through their persistence, diplomatic efforts and sensitivity, all stakeholders finally came together, not so much around the

table but under an acacia tree, to discuss peace. With such a formidable force, working together for a common cause, the goal of peace bore fruit and milk. The community managed to sustain peace for a long time, to be broken only when they slackened their efforts.

Concerned Citizens for Peace

In 2007-2008, Kenya faced one of the worst moments in its history since it attained independence, as a result of the disputed presidential election. The country was plunged into a deep crisis as violence erupted spontaneously in six out of the eight provinces; this created a leadership vacuum.

People who had known my work in the region urged me to intervene. I did not need any prompting and took up the challenge. The first point of call was at one of the major media houses to speak to the nation. On my way to the studio, I called three of my colleagues who were peace practitioners so that we could together appeal to the nation, especially the youth, for peace, and at the same time assure the country that

something was being done. The message went down well and the echoes we received were positive and greatly appreciated. Spontaneously, we decided then and there to meet the next day at what became a strategic place; The Serena Hotel at the heart of the city, a place frequented by leaders, not only politicians but religious leaders, business men and women, intellectuals and diplomats. By coincidence, the international team led by Kofi Annan, who was chosen to broker the peace, had their base at the Serena Hotel.

The choice of the venue could not have been better. During our first meeting, we unanimously decided to ask Dekha to join us. Without any prompting she joined us the following day. We met every morning to review the situation and spoke to the nation or issued a statement. After four or five days we decided to give ourselves a name: Concerned Citizens for Peace. The name captured the mood and the spirit of the group. The title "Concerned Citizens for Peace" by its deepest meaning meant that this was an open, organic movement. It was open to all and belonged to all, anyone concerned for peace. There was no formal leader as such; at the beginning one of us just facilitated the sharing.

We went to the television and announced our existence. We informed the nation of our single objective: peace. We made an open call to anyone concerned and interested to join us every morning at eight o'clock at the Serena Hotel. People turned up to exchange, to share, to pray and

to come up with suggestions on how the crisis could be stopped. We were amazed by those who turned up: intellectuals, men, women, the elderly, former politicians, businessmen, youth, people belonging to opposing parties and representatives of various ethnic groups who were fighting against one another. The doors of that room where we met were open to all and dare we say those who attended came with open hearts and open minds. We had no rules, but it was understood that no thought or idea was small or trivial; every suggestion was taken on board.

Without being conscious of the Dekha Wajir Spirit, this is exactly the methodology which developed organically. We were indeed in a market setting - safe, open and welcoming. Before long, we felt we needed a leader, and without any hesitation we chose Dekha, a woman, Muslim, Somali and a peace maker. The choice was appropriate and right; she steered the team with wisdom, intelligence, sacrifice and a sense of humour. Through her leadership, Concerned Citizens for Peace contributed significantly to the Kenyan Peace Accord without blowing our trumpet.

Moreover, the forty odd days we were at the Serena, no one was paid consultancy fees for any cost incurred. There was a spirit of commitment which was palpable. Yes, there was the market spirit which permeated the place.

After the morning meeting which went up to tea break around ten or ten thirty, the Core Group led by Dekha and anyone who wanted to, remained behind ready to sell our concerns and our ideas. We literally ambushed leaders, connected people, passed on messages and challenged stakeholders. All this was done with passion, concern and a touch of humour. The method worked. In fact, the Kofi Annan Team and the team of Retired Heads of State, who were formally involved with

the negotiations, were amazed by the work done by Concerned Citizens for Peace. They wondered how it was done and how such an idea could be shared throughout the continent of Africa - a continent so richly endowed with ideas, innovative spirit and survival instinct.

REMEMBERING DEKHA IBRAHIM ABDI

Dekha has left us but her market spirit remains with us. As a lasting memorial legacy to Dekha Ibrahim Abdi, let us establish a peace market - a Dekha/Wajir Peace Methodology. Imagine a "market spirit" where all leaders of a country can come and just be there to listen, share and exchange ideas for peace. That will be a revolution!

THE ESSENCE OF SELF: A TRIBUTE TO THE WEAVER OF PEOPLE — DEKHA IBRAHIM ABDI

Richard Smith

It's Women's Month in South Africa, a fitting place and time to seek out the words to express how deeply my own life has been affected by the overlap I have been lucky enough to have with the inspiring life of my beautiful sister.

While it wasn't in South Africa that we met, Dekha travelled here many times, as well as to neighboring Zimbabwe, contributing to many processes that brought women, men and youth together to talk and learn from each other. Many remember the inspirational input she gave to a Women's Month meeting hosted by Johannesburg based Ceasefire Campaign, in a connection arranged by the network movement organisational hub, the ACTION Support Centre. She reached out to

women peacebuilders in particular, but encouraged all of us to approach our work with realism and unrelenting hope, based on the knowledge we had about ourselves, and the world around us, and secure in a shared belief in our common humanity. As always the input she made touched many people deeply.

During our time together in the Southern part of Africa I learned the most about myself from Dekha, (though whenever one was with her, learning was almost always a part of it). In South Africa, as much as I tried, my own history and experiences, coming of age during an intensive struggle against the apartheid regime, meant that I saw the context in terms of politics and power, through a lens of race and class, while Dekha was always able to see people .

We always talked a lot about lenses, and how the ways we see things are affected by who we are and what we've done. One of our favourite workshop moments on the Working With Conflict courses was the exercise when participants had to pile their shoes together and swap them around, literally putting themselves in each other's shoes, and then debriefing for ages on the implications of really getting your head around what this meant for peacebuilding, and for life itself.

'It was this focus on being yourself that I hold as the greatest lesson that Dekha had to share.'

It was this focus on being yourself that I hold as the greatest lesson that Dekha had to share. The idea that it was important for each of us to integrate and embrace the roles we sometimes had to play, with the essence of who we are. She steadfastly refused to play a role that required her to change, or put on a different face, or become something she was not, and all she ever asked was that each of us strives to do the same.

The realisation that your relationship with yourself is at the core of what makes for an effective peacebuilder, became an essential element

of the approach of many of us. Being able to tell the difference, through self-reflection and observation, between what it means to play a role, and what it means to keep the essence of yourself even when you have roles to play, became central to my own self-reflective practice.

Another element of this was the consciousness that our lens is always affected by the context we are viewing, and how we relate to that context. This made analysing the dynamics of conflict so much more than just an attempt to understand the forces at play, and the interconnections between systems, structures and institutions. At home in South Africa, Dekha showed me how to include people in my power and politics lens, unquestionably enabling a far deeper sense of the opportunities and possibilities for effective peacebuilding, so needed in taking our post-liberation struggles forward.

'Be Yourself,
Know yourself,
Grow Yourself'

Out of this beginning, our triangular mantra of *Be Yourself, Know Yourself, Grow Yourself* developed. Striving to be critically aware of who you are, (and why), being, without being influenced by what others expect or want from you, and consciously embarking on a learning journey, aimed at growing, expanding and becoming more effective in everything you do. This Dekha did unfailingly and relentlessly, thereby providing me with a role model and mentor in one of the areas I most needed, the kind of support and nurturing she always provided.

We first met in the early hours of a typical late winter Birmingham morning, arriving fresh from a couple of years in Ethiopia, with my partner Charlotte pregnant with our first. Invited to contribute to the programme of Responding to Conflict, expected to arrive in the dead of night, in a place we knew nothing about, after the long journey from Addis Ababa, and the taxi ride from the airport, Charlotte and I nervously rang the bell on the great green door of Woodbrooke College, expecting we knew not what.

It's pitch black outside, middle of the night, and as the door swings open I catch a glimpse of the woman who would come to mean so much to me. Bedecked as always in the most amazing flowing robes, an aura of Somali myrrh and frankincense about her, gentle, welcoming, and completely exotic. We followed her up through the incredibly winding corridors of the college residence, to a tiny room in the eaves. About to start a new life in a new place, both of us were comforted by the radiance that Dekha had already projected into our lives.

There are too many critical elements of how Dekha saw things to mention in only a brief tribute to her life, and so I will mention only a few, told best, perhaps, through the stories she shared.

I remember one such story she told me on a long car journey, the first time I was lucky enough to find myself on the way to Wajir. Dekha had found herself arriving back at the Jomo Kenyatta Airport in Nairobi, after one of her many travels, late at night, really just wanting to get home and curl up in a warm and familiar bed. But there was a problem, a woman and her children had found themselves trapped at the airport, no transport and no clear plan on what they intended to do next, and they were in the passport immigrations queue behind each other.

Now remember, Dekha had never met this woman before, and it was unlikely had she been anybody else, that they would ever meet again. But instead of putting the conversation behind her, as many of us would do, and moving swiftly to get her bags and leave, she lingered, checking that all was okay with her newfound friend. When she realised they were stranded she moved swiftly to rally support, and the woman found herself and her exhausted children in the heart of Dekha's household, nurtured and cared for. Dekha would tell these stories as if it was fate that had placed her in the path of a woman who needed help, as if it was her that had been the lucky one, for the opportunity that had been provided to give expression to her real love for humanity.

In another one of her tales she recounted her efforts to obtain a national identity document for her amazing daughter Kaltuma. Everybody in Kenya knows that there is often both systemic and personal discrimination against Kenyan Somalis, and Dekha was no fool in this regard. Finding herself beginning to become trapped in a narrative that suggested that this third or fourth unsuccessful visit to the government offices, where she was following up on an application submitted on behalf of her daughter, would confirm the underlying expectation of prejudice, she bumped into a woman, a Kikuyu if I recall. Inevitably they started chatting, and soon realised that both were in similar positions.

The realisation that it was not just Somalis, but all Kenyans that were being delayed and diverted from their intentions by a bungled unproductive system became an opportunity to reaffirm the common humanity at the core of our collective peacebuilding efforts. Dekha befriended the woman and for months they stayed in touch sharing messages and phone calls, updating each other on their respective progress.

Refusing to become a victim, the fierce assertion that victimhood is an unhelpful narrative, and the determination to become a resource for peace that she so often expressed through her actions is gradually becoming the central lens through which we remember Dekha. The collective challenge she leaves us with is to reject this boxing of ourselves, and to seek instead to find the transformative narrative in all we do, all we say and all we hear.

But Dekha was not only a person who put people first. As a facilitator she had an uncanny ability to grasp the dynamics of a room full of people, and know precisely what kind of input would help the group to move forward (sometimes to the chagrin of co-facilitators who had not yet realised that the programme was only ever a guideline as far as

she was concerned). This ability was matched by the manner in which she could simultaneously hold all of the multiple complexities of a conflict context sharply in focus, and so clearly connect the histories of a situation to the dynamics of the present and the vision of an alternative future.

Most of all I will remember Dekha as an artisan. Even now she is still a weaver of human tapestries, who sews connections between people who might never have seen the energies and complementarities that come from working together, with shared purpose and collective vision. She worked with people as different from each other as humanity allows, and somehow through the power of her own existence brought the idea to life that diversity is not a set of differences to be tolerated, but a genuine source of strength and celebration.

Perhaps, it was that with Dekha all of the multiple identities that we all are were in her, so pronounced, and so beautifully balanced. She was all Woman, all Muslim, all Kenyan, all African and all Human, all of the time.

We still have in our cupboard the crushed and dusty remains of a large jar of chillis, grown by her own hand, and with no doubt with the same love and compassion with which she approached everything. I had the chance to visit her family in Mombasa, just days before the accident, and after a beautiful conversation in which we talked about intergenerational peacebuilders, insiders, outsiders and her own favourite, outside insiders, she embraced me, and handed over a farewell gift. Had I known it was the last chance we would have to talk directly face to face I would have lingered, loving as always her assertion that I was Abtip Richard, fully included in her life and family. But as on too many occasions, and with too many other encounters looming on the horizon, we were both moving swiftly to respond to the additional pressures and obligations that pushed us on.

These chillis, maintaining their force and power even as they grow dustier and ever more desert like have come to symbolize the staying power of Dekha and her ideas. For me, and my family, the Dekha Chillis will be a part of our lives forever, keeping our most special meals full of spice, and our lives full of memories. Remembering where we have come from, where we are going, and what that means for how we are in the present. Telling stories, remaining true to what we believe in, and always, knowing ourselves, being ourselves and growing ourselves.

Hamba Kahle Dekha, Go well!

SOME APPROACHES TO PEACEBUILDING IN THE WORK OF DEKHA IBRAHIM ABDI

Bridget Walker

May 1999–"The peace is holding in Wajir West, but very weak. The community is waiting to hear the outcome of the Inquiry. On 22nd of March we had a meeting in Nairobi for the various initiatives in Nairobi and the neighbouring districts of Wajir. Women for peace, and Elders and Youth for Peace attended from Wajir. It was useful to link the grassroots and the National peace initiative. We discussed at length the October massacre and looked at the initiative from the grassroots and the national scene. We exchanged ideas and strategies and a lot of useful learning came from the two-day meeting. This process was funded by the Mennonite Central Committee.

We also learnt at this meeting the initiatives by our neighbours, who are developing the peace and development model. They shared their vision, hopes and frustrations; it was nice because we reflected on our process and shared insights with them of what is normal and abnormal, and the need to have a lot of patience. People have the tendency to start an initiative, want quick results, and if things don't work well in two months then they give up and say it has failed. For me there is no failure in peace initiatives. If something is not working it is an invitation for further work, reflection and learning. Peacework needs some risk-taking and exploring sincerely and learning from our mistakes.

....the peace project in Wajir, as you know, is owned by the community, the government and the donor and hence accountability will be of paramount importance to all, as it is one of the most determinant factors for the success and sustainability of the project."

This passage comes from a letter written by Dekha to Quaker Peace and Service, the service arm of a peace church in the UK, which was funding work in Wajir. These short paragraphs encapsulate the approach to peacebuilding which had been pioneered by Dekha with members of her community in Wajir, and which became a model she went on to develop and enrich in her work over the next 12 years.

In this brief extract we find the following elements:

Inclusion: all the parties affected by the situation were included in a general meeting, and they all had a stake in the Wajir peace project.

Openness: the meeting was open to others 'our neighbours' and there was a mutual sharing of experience and learning.

Connecting at Different Levels: peace initiatives were taking place both at community and national level. This meeting brought the different actors together to discuss the situation and learn from what had been done so far. Connections were also made with others developing the model of the Wajir peace project. In this way linkages were made both vertically and horizontally.

Action and Reflection: there was an opportunity to look back and reflect on actions taken so that lessons could be learned for future work. The meeting discussed frustrations as well as achievements, set benchmarks for what could be regarded as normal or not normal, and looked ahead to hopes for the future.

Learning: this is to be found in discussion and exchange with others; mistakes are not a reason to give up, but rather to be seen as material for learning.

Risk Taking: risk is part of work for peace and should not be inhibited by fear of failure.

Taking Time: peace work needs patience and takes time. We are in it for the long haul and should not expect rapid results. Elsewhere Dekha suggests that this work is not only long term but also continuous. Each generation must struggle anew for peace.

Values: these are implicit in the respect accorded to the actors and the willingness to be open to one another. There is a readiness to talk openly (about the October massacre).

From the Wajir Story to the World: Linking Practice to Policy

The story of Wajir has been told many times and continues to be an inspiring model. The initial processes were publicised in the film **The Wajir Story**. This marked the beginning of **Linking Practice to Policy**, a programme developed jointly by the Coalition for Peace in Africa and Responding to Conflict in the UK. Dekha was associated with the programme from the start and co-ordinated the work when she returned to Africa in 2001.

I worked on the programme from 1999, when I first joined Responding to Conflict (RTC), to the end of the programme in 2006. What follows is a personal account of the programme's aims and achievements, and a reflection on the key role that Dekha played in developing the programme. This is just one part of the story; the programme was a catalyst for many different actors and activities, and others who participated will have other experiences and additional insights to offer.

The Wajir Story: shows a community initiative in northern Kenya, started by women and then involving all the community, including government. Wajir Peace and Development Committee became an established structure, monitoring potential conflicts, and responding when needed.

Gulu: The Struggle for Peace: shows how in the midst of on-going violent conflict, it is still possible to achieve reintegration back into communities, not only for those who have suffered atrocities, but also the child soldiers who have been both victims and perpetrators of violence.

Only through Dialogue: The Somali way to peace: looks at the broad canvas of a state in ruins, and shows how the northern part of Somalia, was rebuilt from the bottom up, drawing on traditional methods of peacebuilding through dialogue with all stake-holders, both traditional and non-traditional actors.

Pulling Together: Community policing in the new South Africa: looks at the challenge to local security and policing posed by democratisation. It describes how one community has painfully rebuilt relationships and forged new roles for police officers and citizens in post-apartheid South Africa.

Linking Practice to Policy: Making the connections: the final video in the series reviews the experiences of the four case studies and invites response and comments from policymakers, including members of Parliament and a UN representative.

The Linking Practice to Policy programme had three components:

- Supporting and linking key local people in volatile areas to work within and across their own regions on conflict prevention and peacebuilding
- Producing and disseminating videos and written case studies of work by peace practitioners to exemplify good practice
- Organising regional and thematic consultations of policymakers to explore new approaches to policy making, which incorporated the accumulating experience and wisdom in African conflict handling.

The First Phase – Telling the Stories

Since it was not possible to obtain funding for the whole programme at the start, it was decided to go ahead with a phased approach. The first phase focused on the second component: the production of video case studies to record peacebuilding initiatives and provide a primary resource for the wider programme of policy related work envisioned in the broad proposal.

Showing and sharing good peace practice

Four video case studies were produced. In addition to the Wajir Story of peacebuilding in Kenya, case studies were drawn from Uganda, South Africa, and self-declared Somaliland. The videos were made in cooperation with the Coalition for Peace in Africa (COPA) and the communities and organisations involved. They demonstrate practical peacebuilding on the ground, and the issues and dilemmas for both practitioners and policy makers. A fifth video draws out the policy issues from the case studies and records responses from decision-makers.

The making of the videos was a lengthy process involving extensive community consultation. They have been important in many different ways:

- Affirming the peacebuilding efforts of the original communities
- Providing a vehicle to explore these conflicts and find new ways of dealing with them.
- Offering an accessible medium to start discussion among other groups about their own conflicts (looking at Gulu in Sierra Leone and Mozambique).
- Providing material which challenges stereotypes of African situations - important for policy makers from 'the North', as well as for African policy makers.
- Offering a resource for training practitioners from Africa and elsewhere in issues related to conflict.

The production of the video case studies was one part of a broader vision, and it was clear as feedback was received from Phase 1, that the original objectives remained valid and work should continue. The medium of video documentation had had a strong impact on those who had seen the films.[1]

An ad hoc dimension?

A mid-term review was commissioned in the first phase, in which the consultant referred to a certain ad hoc dimension to the project. He observed that the project "was not anchored into a body of good practice that RTC wants to communicate to others". This was a disadvantage at one level, but at the same time offered opportunities for broadening the canvas. The good practice was taking root in the different communities where work had begun and as the programme

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[1] The videos and study guides are available at www.respond.org

developed, linkages were created forming a web of communication and connections across Africa. The programme began where there was work that was known, where the energy was. When Dekha became the programme coordinator in the second phase, she brought connection and coherence to the programme in Africa, building close links with the key actors in the countries concerned. RTC established a formal channel for bringing programme learning into RTC's practice, by engaging Dekha to tutor on its annual short course for policy makers, *Strengthening Policy and Practice*.

I would suggest, however, that there continued to be an 'ad hoc' dimension in the programme and that this was not a negative feature. Dekha seized opportunities as they arose and this often bore fruit. Drawing on Scharmer's *Theory U*, I would say that this ad hoc quality is a form of sensing the field which he sees leading to "*crystallizing vision and intention*".[2]

The Second Phase: A Learning Year

Coordination and accompaniment

The second phase was one of consolidation and evaluation, working with communities involved in the original case studies, and making connections with policymakers. The first phase had required a Programme Manager to supervise the production of the videos from start to finish. We decided that the second phase required a Programme Co-ordinator who would be based in Africa and would provide a model of facilitation and accompaniment. Dekha took on this role. This shaped the future process and direction of the programme.

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[2] C.Otto Scharmer (2007): Theory U: Leading from the Future as it Emerges

The role of the individual

The funding body expressed concerns at what seemed like heavy dependence on one individual for the implementation of the project. This can be a weakness and much depends on the individual concerned, his/her concept of the task, way of working and underlying values. Dekha took a lead role in developing the programme in close collaboration with key members of the Coalition for Peace in Africa (COPA) who formed a programme steering group. A report to the funder wrote:

"There is no doubt that this project has relied enormously on the drive and imagination of its co-ordinator, and owes a great deal to her hard work and commitment. It should be stressed that her approach is a collaborative one, working closely from the start with COPA colleagues in the design and facilitation of learning workshops. These have provided a process whereby participants were able to reflect together on their situations and to make further plans for action. The workshops have in addition given an impetus to the formation of grassroots networks for peacebuilding. At the same time Dekha has used the opportunities which have arisen at international gatherings to make contacts with policy makers at the highest level, and to begin forming strategic alliances for the future."

It is a tragic irony that the full measure of Dekha's deep commitment to co-ordination and collaboration rather than command and control has been demonstrated since her death in the outpouring of tributes to her from peaceworkers around the world who have been touched by her presence and inspired by her example. Many individuals wrote

of how she had accompanied them in their peacework. One such worker described how, in a difficult mediation, she phoned Dekha at regular intervals throughout the process and received advice and encouragement at every stage. This model of mentoring was at the heart of her approach to capacity building.

Capacity building: continuity and change

The second phase involved working further with the communities where the videos had been made, to distil learning from their peacebuilding experiences and to create channels of communication between people on the ground and those making the policies which affect their lives and livelihoods at every level from the local to the international.

The original actors reviewed the past and identified current challenges. They valued the way in which the videos had been brought home. This affirmed their efforts and contrasted with the often extractive nature of such documentation.

In addition to seeing and commenting on the video documenting their own situation, they also watched the other video case studies and looked at possible points of synergy. There were exchange visits. The process was inclusive, engaging traditional actors such as the elders and religious leaders, and also women and young people, and representatives of other groups such as lawyers and teachers, local government and the security sector. Several different languages were used, enabling participants to fully participate and demonstrating the diversity of those involved.

A report of the learning workshops concluded that they had provided an opportunity to the communities concerned to reflect on their situation, to strengthen their understanding and to look more widely beyond the boundaries of their own conflicts. The presentation of different peacebuilding initiatives offered different models and strategies for action. Links had been made between Kenya and Uganda. There had been an exchange of information between South Africa and the electoral commission in Somaliland. The seeds had been sown for the development of a wide network of peace builders at the grassroots.

'The Wajir Peace and Development Committee was seen as a valuable and replicable model ...you must have these right!'

Throughout this year Dekha enabled people to meet and reflect, made introductions and grew a widening web of connections, while also facilitating the process of deeper thinking within the communities whose peace processes had been showcased. At a *Partnership for Peace* forum in Mombasa in 2001 which brought together government

and NGOs, the Wajir Peace and Development Committee was seen as a valuable and replicable model. Engaging with policy makers and making linkages with this practice became embedded in the programme.

Linking to policy processes

Bringing the learning of Phase 1 to policy actors was one of the key objectives of Phase 2, and this was done at various levels. The Responding to Conflict (RTC) programme in Birmingham, England provided the support structure. Each year RTC has offered a short course for policy makers entitled *Strengthening Policy and Practice*. Participants on the course include people in influential positions in government, in international NGOs, and in other leadership positions. Dekha was invited to tutor on this course as part of the Linking Policy to Practice programme. This offered a two-way process of learning, whereby Dekha was able to feed in the experience drawn from the programme in Africa, and in turn find out about the concerns of policymakers from a very broad, international spectrum and learn from their experience.

Back in Africa the political context was examined in depth in each learning workshop as key to understanding the changes in the post 9/11 world, their impact and the responses needed. Policy making at national, regional and international level was part of the programme. This had started in the first phase but became more explicit at this point. There was a continual process whereby what had been implicit became explicit when tested through practice and experience. Dekha noted that the *Partnership for Peace* forum mentioned above *"helped me make the right contact with policy shapers and implementers."* She was invited onto the National Steering Committee for Peace in Kenya and was able to press issues which had emerged from the workshops, such as the role of women in peacebuilding, the position of pastoralists, the need to find ways of steering young men away from violence and the need for mechanisms to address cross-border conflicts.

She was asked subsequently to make presentations at two IGAD[3] meetings - in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) and Khartoum (Sudan). The videos were used as a resource for discussions of the role of women in peacebuilding and of government policy towards pastoralist communities. Proposals coming out these meetings led to the establishment of cross-border mechanisms for conflict early warning and response. An opportunity for peace advocacy at an international level arose with the holding of the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa in 2002. Participants from the LPP learning workshop in South Africa joined with other peace activists to strategise on ways to influence the World Summit. COPA Southern Africa took a lead role in coordinating the Peace and Development Platform which brought together NGOs, faith groups and others concerned that issues of peace and development should be on the Summit agenda. In the lead up to the Summit, Dekha made a presentation at a meeting on demilitarisation hosted by Ceasefire, a South African organisation. This is an example where others took the lead and Dekha was able to make a contribution from her own direct experience.

'In the lead up to the Summit, Dekha made a presentation at a meeting on demilitarisation hosted by Ceasefire, a South African organisation.'

Widening the Web: The Third Phase

The work of discussion, networking and dissemination of information from the case studies in the learning year led to the articulation of a number of key issues for continued attention. These included, among others, further work on policing in South Africa, strengthening traditional institutions in Somaliland and traditional methods of conflict handling and the role of non-state actors in Kenya, and the need for conflict early warning and response mechanisms and community policing in Uganda.

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[3] Intergovernmental Authority on Development: IGAD's mission is to assist and complement the efforts of the Member States to achieve, through increased cooperation: Food Security and environmental protection; Promotion and maintenance of peace and security and humanitarian affairs, and Economic cooperation and integration. IGAD is a regional development organization in East Africa.

These issues were pulled together under the broad heading of human safety and security. There was continuation of work at the local level, with thematic training workshops on human safety and security in the four original countries - Kenya, Somaliland, South Africa and Uganda. Participatory workshops were again a key mechanism for taking the issues forward. These workshops had demonstrated their value in the learning year, and were now enhanced with exchange visits between communities. At a practical level there was increased participation in peacebuilding by young people, as well as traditional and religious leaders. Teachers and students were engaged in a systematic programme of peace education in schools in Kenya.

'At a practical level there was increased participation in peacebuilding by young people, and traditional and religious leaders.'

There were different levels of engagement in the policy agenda. In the regions and countries of the Linking Peace Practice to Policy activities, there had been no comprehensive policy framework for peace work. In Kenya and Uganda the Government, in collaboration with civil society and the donor community, started a process of developing a National

Policy for Peacebuilding and Conflict Transformation; Dekha together with other LPP actors contributed to the process. The geographical links grew in the Horn of Africa, with relationships made with Puntland, Somalia, Djibouti and Eritrea. There were also opportunities to engage with policy makers at the African Union and NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa's Development).[4]

Learning was also shared more broadly. Drawing on relationships in the global Action for Conflict Transformation network a series of exchange visits were held which extended beyond the frontiers of Africa, engaging peaceworkers from the Philippines who visited Kenya and Somaliland, and making exchanges between Uganda and Cambodia.

At an international level COPA/LPP members contributed to discussions hosted by UNIFEM on UN Resolution 1325 on women in peacebuilding, and engaged with UN processes designed to draw attention to the impact of small arms and light weapons on developing countries. International actors had been trying to shift the small arms debate away from total focus on the supply side – i.e. trying to ban manufacture and trade – which had proven ineffective in most conflict situations. They wanted governments and policy makers to pay more attention to the 'demand side' - the conditions that feed a continuing sense of insecurity or perpetuate cycles of violence in society, thus perpetuating the demand for arms.

After a significant meeting in Nairobi in 2004, Dekha wrote:

"The Nairobi declaration on small arms and light weapons brought together 10 member states which committed them to working to reduce the demands on small arms and light weapons. COPA has partnered with

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[4] The New Partnership for Africa's Development. NEPAD is a planning and coordinating technical body of the African Union, aiming to eradicate poverty and create sustainable growth. *www.nepad.org/*

the Quaker UN office in Geneva and worked with the Nairobi secretariat in providing practical case studies for learning on how peacebuilding and conflict transformation work reduces the demand for small arms. This work contributes toward a global debate in which a key event is the UN review scheduled for June to July 2006."

Dear Dekha, Brigitte and Stella,

Both David Atwood and I would like to thank you for the time, thought and energy you put into the excellent presentations you made at our workshop on small arms demand in Nairobi on February 16.

As well as providing information on effective demand-related programming, you also presented persuasive evidence of the contribution that civil society makes to the practical control of small arms violence. In addition, if there was any doubt about the important role that women can and do play in this work, your project descriptions would have put that concern to rest once and for all.

We invited you to Nairobi in part because of the very effective programme descriptions you provided at our earlier event in 2004 in Nairobi. Your presentations this month demonstrated the increasing depth of your analysis and the consequent effectiveness of your work. By the questions that participants asked it was clear that you each had provided information that was new, convincing and very relevant to work on the ground.

In addition, your examples really helped to put "small arms demand work" in a more understandable context for those who are unfamiliar with this approach.

We were proud to be associated with you at this workshop. We learned a great deal from your presentations and hope to share some of this in our upcoming lobbying with delegations at the UN.

Best of all, we look forward to other opportunities to work together.

David Jackman and David Atwood
Quaker UN Office, Geneva

This chapter began with an extract from a letter that Dekha had written to Quaker Peace and Service in 1999. The connection was maintained, and the above letter from the representatives of the Quaker UN Office in Geneva demonstrates the continuity and growth of her work, both in practice and in policy arguing for recognition of the contribution to peacework on the ground made by civil society groups and the women who are integral to them.

Learning, Reflection and Review

Clear objectives, strategic activities: the COPA evaluation

In 2004, COPA's main funder had required an external evaluation of the network before making decisions on further funding. Among other activities, COPA had been functioning as the steering committee of the Linking Policy to Practice project (LPP). The evaluators noted the role played by the LPP programme and commented:

"Our own assessment is that LPP as a project is clear in its objectives and strategic in its activities. Its conceptual clarity and sophistication give it greater impact than would otherwise be the case. The focal communities of its activities exhibit the impact of the involvement with LPP, in terms of the skills and confidence of practitioners and trainers, new and inclusive structures, the involvement of local leaders and administration in peace activities, and the capacity of the community to analyse conflicts and intervene.[5]"

Frank discussion among peers: the mid-term review process

The COPA review was a valuable resource in the planning for the LPP mid-term review, which had been written into the third phase of the programme. It was decided that this should be a peer review, involving the key COPA members of the steering group, an RTC Associate engaged in peacework in Asia and an external reviewer who had worked with RTC on the MA level course in *Applied Conflict Transformation Studies*. The peer review process was designed not only to evaluate the programme but to enable cross fertilisation between the reviewers, and to build capacity to monitor, assess and evaluate the impacts of peacebuilding among those directly engaged in such work.

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[5] Williams and Thomas (2004)

In evaluation, as in implementation, inclusivity and openness were key. The findings were very positive but the team also made space for recognition of what had not worked. The report notes difficulties such as where follow up work had not taken place, and where they found lack of clarity in some internal issues and relationships. Honest self-assessment and critique made in a spirit of critical solidarity from those committed to the programme is far more likely to be taken on board than observations from an external reviewer with no further stake in future outcomes.

The challenge and necessity of measuring impact

There are many challenges to assessing the impact of peacebuilding. There are multiple actors with often conflicting or competing interests, operating in a context of risk and unpredictability. In addition it is never easy to prove a negative – that violence was prevented – and to which people and processes this can be attributed. But it is important to explore whether our work is making a difference and if so in what ways and to whom.

In a final report Dekha described the numbers of people engaged, areas now involved and potential impacts. The *'ripple effect'* that she describes has continued.

*"From February 2003 to January 2006 the LPP project has directly engaged a total **of 2692 persons of which 1529 are men and 1163** are women. The greater proportion of the beneficiaries (1642), are young people between the age of 9 and 18 yrs. There have been equal numbers of boys and girls. These are the numbers that can be tracked through records of workshops, peace diaries and other programme activities. However, the programme has had a ripple effect, with many direct programme participants then taking initiatives back to*

their communities. One example of this would be the way in which one participant in an early workshop in Wajir initiated processes back home whereby flash points for conflict, such as watering points, were monitored and managed, following the model of the Wajir Peace and Development Committee."

"LPP beneficiaries in Kenya are 7 districts and 8 organisations, in Uganda 6 districts and 8 organisations, in Somalia 5 regions and 7 organisations, in southern Africa 4 countries and 5 organisations."

The importance of active peacebuilding

Many of the activities described above are concerned with training and learning about peace practice and advocacy. Throughout the time of the programme Dekha was also directly engaged in peace initiatives close to home. She continued to learn from doing as well as to facilitate others to enhance their capacities for peacebuilding. The paragraph below describes just one such action. Here a combination of material aid to those displaced by the conflict and on-going accompaniment over several months led to the signing of a peace accord and return home:

"In 2005 LPP engaged directly in supporting communities affected by violence and war in Kenya and Somalia. This took the form of emergency support to community peace processes. This, together with between 3 and 6 months of continuous accompaniment, led to the signing of a peace accord between the parties in conflict. The direct beneficiaries of the peace are in Kenya Mandera district with a population of 300,000 (three hundred thousand) and Elwak Somalia with population of 20,000 (twenty thousand) who have now gone back home, with their safety and security enhanced."

Conclusion

I have tried in this brief description of a rich and multi-layered programme to give an insight into the way in which Dekha approached and developed her remarkable peacemaking skills. The LPP programme became a working model which was tried and tested and adapted, following the four key components of action research – analysis, decision and planning, action and reflection. To these should be added the component of recording and documenting the experience. This is a model for both individual and collective action.

To be effective these components need to be linked so that there is action and influencing on policy at different levels. Time is a key element – peacebuilding is sensitive and slow and requires sustained accompaniment and action. It is important to identify points of entry. It may be possible for the sub-system to shift even when the overall system seems immoveable, if an approach is made at the human level.

And it is at the human level that Dekha made a profound impression. Her deep faith was a firm foundation from which she reached out to others. She delighted in mentoring others and making connections. She was a sophisticated thinker, analysing the complexity of situations and also thinking laterally, coming to conclusions that were often unpredictable. She did not compromise with simple or sunny answers while being deeply humane, combining care for family and friends with profound commitment and tenacity of purpose.

It is often said that peace is a process and the means are the end in the making. We must try to be the change we want to see in the world. This was at the heart of Dekha's peace practice.

Bridget Walker worked at Responding to Conflict from 1999 to 2006. She had oversight of the Linking Practice to Policy Programme throughout that time.

TRANSFORMING THE DISCOURSE OF VIOLENCE AND DESPAIR: OPENING WINDOWS IN THE MIND IN PALESTINE AND ISRAEL

Marwan Darweish and Joan McGregor
with Bridget Walker

We must go on learning from Dekha.
— Participant in a seminar with Israeli CSOs on Feminism and Militarism 2005.

Windows have opened in the mind; we are beginning to think in different ways about how to deal with issues. If you lived inside a room, all your thinking would be confined to that room. Without a window you would think the room was the world. But if someone opened a window to see outside...

— West Bank participant in the RTC Middle East programme, 2007.

Between 2003 and 2007 Responding to Conflict (RTC)[6] worked with Palestinian and Israeli civil society organisations (CSOs) engaged in the search for a just and sustainable peace. Dekha Ibrahim was one of a diverse group of facilitators who took part in this programme of solidarity, accompaniment and capacity building. This chapter gives a brief introduction to the context and programme, its aims, processes and outcomes, and the distinctive contribution which Dekha made. The chapter is based on interviews with Marwan Darweish, now lecturer in Peace Studies at the University of Coventry, and Joan McGregor, Peace and Conflict Adviser at RTC, and on unpublished written reports from the time.

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[6] RTC is an independent conflict transformation organisation and a registered charity that has worked since 1991 to support people and organisations in transforming violent conflict and building lasting peace. RTC is based in Birmingham, UK (www.respond.org)

Background

The Israel/Palestine conflict has deep roots and a long history in which international actors have played a key role. There are different and contested narratives over sovereignty, and the Israeli occupation and continuing annexation of Palestinian land. The situation has led to a pattern of military repression and popular resistance in a violent cycle of action and reaction. The dominant public discourse on both sides legitimises the use of violence, whether seen as a means of liberation or as a guarantee of security. Despite public recognition on both sides of the conflict that a sustainable solution is desperately needed, any meaningful progress has been blocked by intractable differences of understanding, priorities and concerns.

In this context of on-going violence and despair, civil society organisations working for a just resolution of the main causes of the conflict have found themselves marginalised and disempowered. At the time when this programme was being developed both Palestinian and Israeli CSOs had been able to make little effective impact on the political impasse. They had faced constant challenges in a rapidly changing political environment. On both sides people working non-violently for peace and justice were fragmented and demoralised. In addition there was rivalry for profile and resources, and a lack of trust. The situation had led to the growth of an organisational culture of reactive and short term action with little common strategy, either within each side or between them. It was hard to have a long term vision.

Yet civil society organisations have a crucial role to play in the struggle to formulate and implement the framework for a just peace. They can offer an alternative vision, inspiration and hope, even in the midst of violence, mobilising the general public and influencing decision makers and politicians. They can provide a voice for ordinary people to advocate for and support moves towards a just resolution of conflict. They can

encourage engagement in building the institutions and processes needed to sustain longer term patterns of justice and peace in the region.

The programme – the pilot phase

It was for these reasons and in these circumstances that RTC began to investigate possibilities for working with civil society actors in the region. Between April 2003 and January 2004 an initial study was carried out with Israeli and Palestinian CSOs, to hear their views, and to establish whether there was a role for RTC in relation to their experience and needs. In Israel this pilot phase involved 'listening' visits to some twenty CSOs, and facilitation of a number of short 'one-off' seminars with specific organisations, which expressed interest in working on a second phase.

In Palestine two five-day seminars were held for participants nominated by CSOs in the West Bank and Gaza. This was co-ordinated by the Palestinian NGO network (PNGO). The seminars took place in Amman, Jordan, in August 2003 and Cairo, Egypt in December 2003. They focused on analysing and understanding conflict, possible intervention strategies, impact assessment and exploring visions of Palestinian society. During the pilot phase groups were encouraged to name and confront differences among them, particularly around questions of vision and political positioning. This, they said, had been an empowering process.

The second phase

The pilot phase was well received, and a proposal was developed with CSO partners in the region for a further three year programme of action and learning to consolidate the work begun in the pilot phase, and to lay the ground work for on-going accompaniment of a long term process of strategy building and conflict transformation. Entitled *Transforming the*

Discourse of Violence and Despair the programme's stated aim was to make a practical contribution to:

> "The achievement of a just and sustainable resolution to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, based on democratic and accountable structures and processes of governance which support the handling and resolution of conflict without recourse to violence.[7]"

The immediate objective was to build the capacity of both Palestinian and Israeli CSOs, so that they could become more pro-active and work strategically to:

> "Ensure that the visions, aspirations and concerns of Israeli and Palestinians for a just settlement of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict (would) impact effectively on political decision makers and public discourse.[8]"

Both sides shared a common goal – to end the Israeli Occupation of Palestinian Territories. However, the different contexts in Israel and Palestine meant there were different challenges for the different groups. It was decided to work separately with Palestinian and Israeli CSOs, in a number of different structured forums for strategic reflection and analysis.

These were designed to promote:

- *The formulation of a clear vision for a just peace;*
- *An awareness of, and ability to analyse the wider context of the conflict, including an understanding of the linkages between social justice and a political settlement;*

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[7] RTC internal document: Transforming the discourse of violence and despair: Strengthening the impact of Palestinian and Israeli CSOs in the search for a just and sustainable peace. Proposal for a Second Phase of Work: 1 September 2004 – 31August 2007
[8] Ibid.

- *A clear sense, on the part of the CSOs, of their own role and impact within that context;*
- *The choice of clear priorities and focus areas for the future work of CSOs participating in the project;*
- *A culture of long-term planning and strategising[9].*

The longer term programme plan was the creation of on-going forums in both Palestinian and Israeli society for the development and testing of a shared vision and coherent strategy to address the endemic violence and instability of the region. It was envisaged that these forums would have different starting points, different ways of operation and would take different shapes.

Facilitation team

The programme involved building trust and inspiring engagement in the early stages, and this required energy, focus and long term commitment. Marwan Darweish and Joan McGregor led, and co-ordinated the facilitation team. The group of facilitators was intentionally diverse, and worked across the board at different times with both Palestinian and Israeli partners. Members brought their experience of working with conflict in their home countries of Palestine/Israel, South Africa, former Yugoslavia and the Philippines. Those rooted in the peace movement in Britain also brought experience of conflict areas in other parts of the world. Dekha brought experience of working with violent conflict in her own country of Kenya and elsewhere in Africa over a sustained period of time. As the programme developed, facilitators from the partner CSOs joined the pool of trainers. Today they bring to their current work their experience, skills and insights drawn from this programme.

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[9] Ibid.

Programme activities: What did they do?

In Palestine a series of strategy seminars were held, together with interim meetings and distance support for the emerging Palestinian strategy forum.

In Israel two separate series of short workshops were held over three years for Israeli organisations working on social and political change.

The focus was on building partners' understanding of, and skills in conflict transformation (conflict analysis, mediation and negotiation, intervention strategies, and the link between conflict and development and peacebuilding) at workshops and follow up meetings, and supporting partners to apply this learning to specific conflicts within their societies, primarily at grassroots/community and organisational levels.

Issues addressed at the workshops included the vital question of land and water resources, education, the needs of young people, conflict and violence within society, and violence against women. A seminar in Israel looked specifically at militarism and the feminist response. The workshops also offered a forum for discussion of national issues and policies.

Training of trainers workshops were held to build the 'multiplier effect' of the programme. Some Palestinian members co-trained with RTC at Conflict Transformation workshops for international organisations based in the region. There was also co-facilitation by members of an Israeli CSO at conflict transformation workshops run by RTC in Israel.

In addition to work in the region some members of participating CSOs attended courses held at RTC's base in Birmingham in the UK. The 10 week *Working with Conflict* course, held annually, provided an opportunity to meet practitioners from all over the world, and to exchange experience

and insights with others working in situations of violent conflict. It was also a forum where both Israelis and Palestinians met. In 2007 a Palestinian co-tutored on the course with the RTC tutor team.

The short, one week course *Strengthening Policy and Practice* provided an opportunity to meet policy makers and those in influential positions. Marwan described the impact of the course on a Palestinian activist who was initially very suspicious about RTC's programme. The presence of representatives of INGOs such as Oxfam and Christian Aid, and of the UK Department for International Development, and the opportunity to engage with them, gave the course – and with it the Middle East programme – legitimacy. The case studies used, which demonstrated how development initiatives in conflict have the potential to cause harm, create tension and further politicise a situation, also helped to bring about a shift in understanding. Dekha was a key facilitator on this course.

Print resources such as the publication *Working with Conflict: Skills and Strategies for Action*[10] were translated into Arabic and Hebrew.

Outcomes: Summary findings

By the end of the second phase of the programme there was substantial evidence of the impact that the interventions had made on the working practices and organisational cultures of the participating CSOs.

Professor Andrew Rigby, from Coventry University's Centre for Peace and Reconciliation Studies, who evaluated the programme, commented that:

> "This programme has achieved a number of significant outcomes. A cohort of people have become 'literate' in conflict transformation

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[10] Fisher et al (2000): Working with Conflict: skills and strategies for action

skills, and have begun to speak the same language, recognising the importance of handling conflict at whatever level by nonviolent means. As such the programme has made a contribution to the struggle to counter the expanding culture of violence that is a feature of both Palestinian and Israeli society."

It is not possible here to detail all the positive changes that were identified in the evaluation of the programme but the examples below give a flavour of the richness and variety of outcomes. In Palestine new practices were introduced in the West Bank in the field of health care, education, law and agricultural and water resource management. Forums for active nonviolence were established in West Bank universities, the Palestinian Medical and Agriculture Relief Committees integrated conflict sensitivity into their medical development and relief programmes, women's organisations began to use a conflict transformation approach in addressing community conflicts, and newly qualified lawyers used conflict transformation skills to mediate and resolve legal disputes. Local communities and agricultural workers in Gaza and the north of the West Bank used mediation techniques to resolve conflict over water and agricultural resources. The Conflict Transformation Resource Group was formed and still operates.

In Israel a strategy group was established, composed of twenty five directors of prominent Jewish and Palestinian Arab organisations. A membership based organisation promoting the rights of Mizrahi or 'Oriental' Jews worked with RTC in co-ordinating a cluster of organisations lobbying for equitable land reform in Israel. The movement for the rights of Mizrahi Jews took a position against the continuing occupation of the Palestinian territories. Israel's largest capacity building body for social change organisations, Shatil, established a Centre for Conflict Transformation and Management which ran monthly seminars, seeking to increase the impact of civil society in Israel on peace processes and the prevention of violence.

By the end of the three year period it was possible to see real movement towards the programme vision. In 2006 this had been articulated as follows:

> "The programme vision is of a strong, credible civil society, with public support and political influence, to promote non-violent processes and solutions, and to act as a safety net of democratic values.[11]"

Dekha's contribution

Dekha was connected with the programme from her first visit to the region in 2005. She participated in a key evaluation and response discussion in 2006 and made a further visit to the West Bank in 2007.

As a Muslim woman, and an African, who had devoted herself to peacebuilding over many years, she brought her direct personal knowledge of living in and engaging with violent situations. Her approach was strategic, always searching for the full picture and identifying the range of actors including the potential 'spoilers'. She combined a keen analytical approach, dissecting the complexities of conflict and the structural nature of oppression, with human warmth and openness.

Here are some of the qualities which were appreciated at the time:

Personality and Presence

> *I have many identities. I can choose which one to display.*
> – Dekha on her first visit to Israel/Palestine

Dekha followed the Islamic dress code of her Somali culture. This meant that in some places her appearance led her to stand out from

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[11] From RTC Internal document: Response and Evaluation Meeting 2006

the crowd. Joan gives a graphic description of Dekha's arrival at the airport at Tel Aviv in Israel on her first visit in 2005:

"When Dekha first came to work with us on the RTC project in Israel and Palestine, the project was in its early days – and it was really tough in the area. ….We had a long correspondence and discussions about what to expect at immigration, especially that Dekha's usual dress was likely to give rise to masses of assumptions and hook negative or even hostile responses on the part of the immigration officials in Tel Aviv airport."

"…She arrived wearing wonderful African regalia – a beautiful kaftan and a turban that met the requirements of her Muslim persona, and also was less likely to raise questions about Muslim identity. …when we met I told her how wonderful she looked. She looked me in the eye and said 'I have many identities. I can choose which one to display'. …We sailed through immigration, with enquiring looks and much curiosity from all …I almost expected the immigration officials to form an arch of honour for her to walk through."

However, Dekha did face provocation from the authorities at various points and responded peaceably but also assertively and creatively. On her *second* visit in 2007 she was asked on arrival at Tel Aviv airport, if her husband knew she was travelling. She was upset by the question, but responded by offering her phone '*You can ring him*', and then quietly turned the pages of her passport to show the visa stamps from the many countries she had visited.

She sought to find and address the humanity of the people that she met in every difficult encounter.

After a visit to Gaza the process of leaving was a great ordeal. Joan described how they dealt with each locked gate they encountered.

They sat down and Dekha took out her sewing and Joan her crossword puzzles. They had taken fruit and sandwiches with them, so had a picnic while they waited. Joan writes that when they were told they could enter they had to ask the guards to wait while they packed up their stuff. This was repeated twice more… and the last time they actually persuaded the guard to have a biscuit.

However, they were not yet through. At the last hurdle – the X-ray machines and conveyor belt for luggage – Dekha was repeatedly addressed in Arabic, although she kept saying that she did not speak the language. Joan writes:

"Eventually Dekha said 'You can see me and hear me and I can hear you but I can't see you, where are you?' The guard said 'Look to the left'-far up in the rafters behind us there was a guard behind bullet-proof glass. Dekha waved to him and said 'You are so far away; I can't see you properly…'Eventually he moved towards us and apologised profusely for having addressed Dekha in Arabic, as if it was somehow insulting – which brought us yet another difficulty of how to move on without colluding with him. Dekha just laughingly said she wished she could speak as many languages as there were at the Tower of Babel."

It was not just in the encounters with officialdom that difficulties arose. One group, whose members were very divided in their views on how they should work for change, acted out their power struggles in the workshop, with one section leaving the meeting and, then creating a lot of noise within earshot of the room. Joan describes Dekha's response 'Through all this Dekha was a complete rock, she was clear and respectful'. At this workshop her dress was cause for hostile questioning. Joan comments that: 'Again Dekha's grace and calmness were of immense value'.

A role model for women peace makers

I felt empowered by Dekha's presence: a female peacemaker who can relate to our own experiences.
– Palestinian Workshop participant, 2007

Dekha offered an important role model to women as a female peace maker. Indeed she also shattered some of the stereotyped assumptions about Muslim women; she was rooted and grounded in her deep and sincere faith, open to others with very different backgrounds and understandings, and possessed of a sophisticated intelligence which she brought to every encounter.

In the view of one commentator, the fact that Dekha worked so closely and effectively with those who came from a more secular background, provided important validation of their work to some religious groups.

Support and Challenge

Dekha enjoyed being in the region and this in itself was an encouragement. She shared openly with others but also challenged them to go beyond their comfort zones. In Palestine she asked the group to think about who was not present. The group members came largely from mainstream NGOs with a leftist secular background with a few Christian church related members. Dekha faced them with questions they had not previously addressed. Where, she asked, were others such as Islamic religious actors, what about the private sector and the role of the police? This questioning arose from her own experience where she had been challenged to engage with non-traditional development actors such as the private sector, lawyers, the police and even the army. She brought awareness of the wider context into the meetings and into the planning. She stressed that there is no quick fix, no easy answers and people must come with their own

ideas. The process will be slow, and it is important to be aware of the different players.

A member of a Palestinian group, who had initially thought that conflict transformation and peacebuilding was essentially Western propaganda, was challenged and impressed by Dekha. When this practitioner moved jobs she took her skills and knowledge with her into an INGO which had not previously included conflict transformation and peacebuilding in its development work. The INGO now has a department concerned with conflict handling skills in development.

Sharing Experience

Many participants felt empowered by Dekha's shared experience. They realised it is possible to bring about change using a step by step strategy. It brought them renewed hope.
– Report of Israeli workshop, 2007

For people who were both sceptical and reluctant to think that they had anything to learn from an African experience, Dekha was able to draw out the common features that they shared from living and working in a context of violence. Marwan suggested that she *demystified this sense of uniqueness* in a way that was empowering for those involved. It was very important for Israeli and Palestinian CSOs to see what people round the world were doing. Their situation had become acute and urgent; there was a feeling that *if Northern Kenya is doing this, why not Palestine?*

Not only did Dekha share her experience but she also demonstrated how she personally had worked to process the violence that had been part of her early years. It had not been easy and had taken conscious effort and time. In her keynote speech at the Asia Peacebuilders Forum in 2010 she described how, in 2004 before she went on the Haj,

the Islamic pilgrimage, she forgave and requested forgiveness from all she both knew and did not know. This included forgiving her own government of Kenya, and especially its security institutions. This gave her a sense of calm which she carried with her. She recounted how, in 2005, when she was visiting the Al Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem she was interrogated by both Israeli and Palestinian security forces before entering the mosque:

> "I was calm and greeted them; my greeting shocked both and took them off guard. I had dealt with my issues concerning the Kenya security forces and was in another emotional and spiritual space.[12]"

Beyond sharing – linking practice and theory

Dekha shared her early and continuing experience in Wajir in Northern Kenya and also drew on her involvement in cross-border work in East Africa. She used the video documentaries of case studies from Kenya, Somaliland and Uganda, (see chapter: *"Some Approaches to Peacebuilding..."*) to draw out examples of issues of identity, tensions between allegiance to cultural versus state laws and norms, and the complexity of unresolved land issues such as those in Kenya which went back to the colonial period. In a report of a workshop held in 2006 the comment was made that:

> "The case study (Wajir) generated a lot of questions and many learnings were identified. They were able to cross-reference between their own situation and that of the case study. This was a deep and reflective time in which critical questions were raised.[13]"

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[12] Action Asia (2011): Transforming our Woundedness for Peace
[13] Internal RTC document: Mossawa workshop report 2006

Throughout her work Dekha stressed the importance of making connections between the work of practitioners on the ground and policy makers at local, national, regional and international levels.

Structural Analysis

One of Dekha's key contributions to the programme was her ability to hold different issues together and create a structural analysis. At a workshop in Gaza in 2005 she described the creative tensions in strategic thinking, on the one hand, being reactive (management of the present crisis) while having a proactive approach (preparing a society for peace as well as conflict transformation and other skills development training). She asked how do we conserve what is of value from the past, and at the same time also reform, and develop new structures and attitudes for the future? How do we stop/deal with violence while building peace?

There are many tools of conflict transformation which offer diagrams to help to give a visual illustration of the issues being explored. For Dekha the nested paradigm, developed by peace researcher Maire Dugan and adapted by John Paul Lederach was a favourite framework.[14] It offers a means of showing the relationship between the immediate issues in a conflict and the systemic aspects, at different levels and over time. In the Gaza workshop she used it to illustrate how crisis management can be linked with long term system change.

At a workshop with Israeli participants she used the diagram to analyse structural violence within Israel and towards Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. The diagram can illustrate both the open-ended and hidden forms of structural inequality and oppression. Dekha showed how local systems feed into the national system and indeed the international

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[14] See the end of this chapter for a diagram of the nested paradigm adapted by RTC.
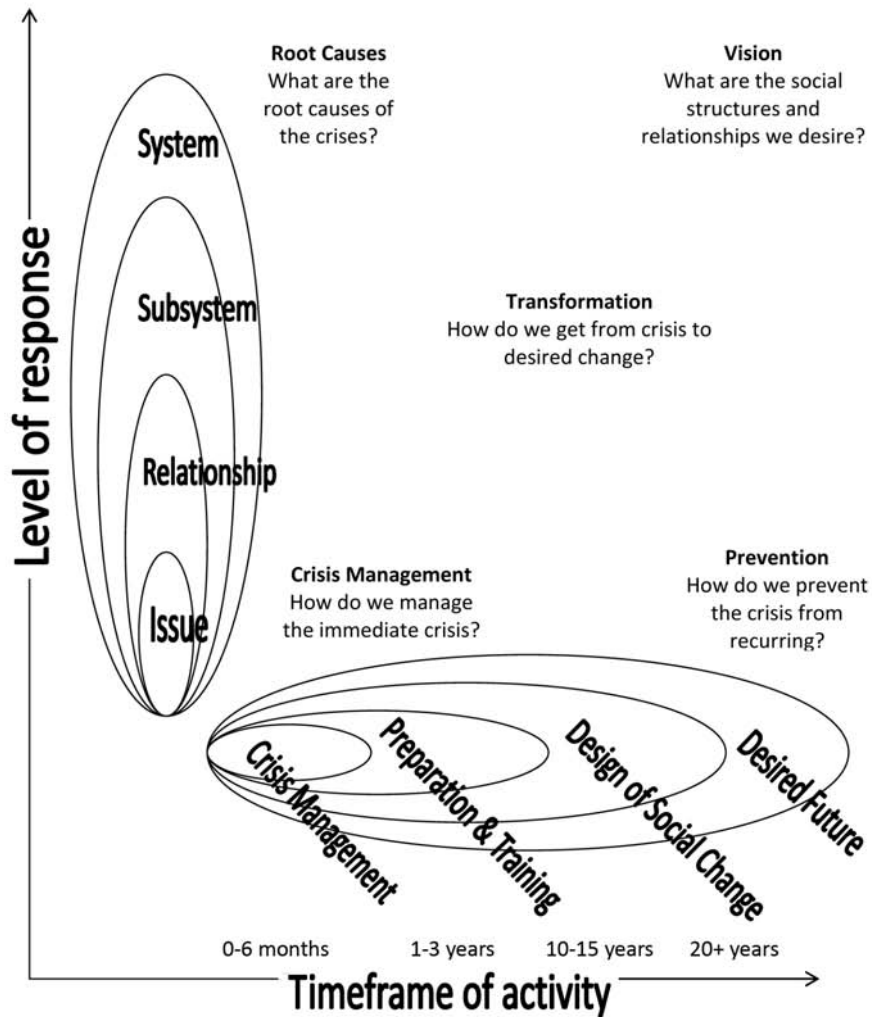
one, and how there are inherent inequalities at every level. She created what Marwan described as a *mayhem* of discussion within the group. She asked what part of the system they wanted to look at, for example, militarism, Palestinians in Israel, budget allocations in Israel, and rights. She was then able to show how these together formed the structures presented in the paradigm. At the same time she offered hope, pointing out that however small you may be, you can be clear about what you want to achieve both at your own level but more widely.

Values and Vision

Dekha always sought the value base of peace work, and this included the importance of working with others. She co-facilitated workshops with others in the team, and enabled participants in the workshops to develop their own questions and plans. She also looked beyond the immediate horizon to the shape of the future. This was very important in Israel and Palestine where people felt imprisoned in the violence and crises of the here and now, and found it difficult to develop a long term vision of a different, peaceable future.

The programme had been entitled *Transforming the discourse of violence and despair*. Many courageous people came together to strengthen an alternative discourse and develop a vision of peace to which Dekha made her unique contribution. Her death was mourned by many the world over. In Israel, Anat Reisman-Levy, on receiving news of her death, exclaimed: 'I am in shock. I am so deeply sorry. I have so much love for this woman. Omar Mansour from the West Bank spoke for many when he wrote: How hard it is to lose a great person. Dekha left us physically but her spirit remains'.

An Integrated Framework for Peacebuilding

Root Causes
What are the
root causes of
the crises?

Vision
What are the social
structures and
relationships we desire?

Transformation
How do we get from crisis to
desired change?

Crisis Management
How do we manage
the immediate crisis?

Prevention
How do we prevent
the crisis from
recurring?

System

Subsystem

Relationship

Issue

Crisis Management

Preparation & Training

Design of Social Change

Desired Future

Level of response

0-6 months   1-3 years   10-15 years   20+ years

Timeframe of activity

Source: John Paul Lederach in 'Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies'
US Institute of Peace Press 1997

©rtc
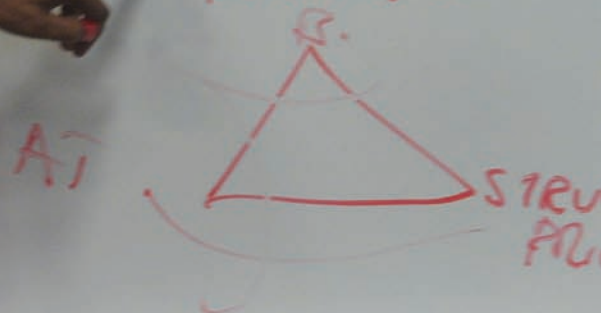**responding to conflict**

POLICY MATTERS:

THE IMPORTANCE OF POLICY IN PEACE PRACTICE

Dekha Ibrahim Abdi
Bridget Walker

Foreword

The idea for this paper arose when the Linking Practice to Policy programme came to a formal close in 2006. The aim of the programme, which was a joint initiative of Responding to Conflict and the Coalition for Peace in Africa, had been to document a number of African peacebuilding initiatives, to support further developments within these initiatives, and to encourage linkages and networking between the different peace practitioners. There was a focus on the frequent gap between practice and policy and the need to bridge this gap for peace practice to be effective and durable.

Those of us who had been involved in the programme over the years felt that there was a substantial body of grey literature from which learning could be distilled. We thought that this would be of interest to others engaged in conflict transformation and peace practice, whether they were practitioners on the ground or employed in policy formulation and implementation.

An outline was agreed and the paper went through several drafts before coming to a standstill in 2008/9 when other issues took priority. The work came to a halt and was not resumed until the sad death of Dekha Ibrahim in 2011 prompted a reappraisal of the paper. It contains much of Dekha's experience and will, I hope, demonstrate both the breadth and depth of her thought and practice.

The paper does, however, remain incomplete. I have made what additions and amendments I could, but there are gaps which only Dekha could have filled. Nevertheless, I hope that it will be a tribute to Dekha, and also to the many colleagues who worked on the Linking Practice to Policy programme and still maintain their commitment to work for peaceful and transformative change.

Bridget Walker
April 2012

Introduction

Peacebuilding: a challenge for policy makers?

State building and peacebuilding are potentially contradictory processes – the former requiring the consolidation of governmental authority, the latter involving its moderation through compromise and consensus.[15]
– A Vote for Peace, page 4

Violent conflict, within and across national boundaries, has affected communities throughout Africa. These conflicts often seem intractable, extending over many years and resulting in deaths, displacement of communities, degradation of the environment and impoverishment. Historical conflicts between different groups and across borders have become more deadly with the ready availability of arms and the existence of landmines. New conflicts have arisen, out of complex political emergency situations, or as a result of the impacts of globalisation. Communities and states alike are fractured.

Yet wherever war is being waged, there are also women and men working to create dialogue between warring parties, to transform conflict and to build peace. Their efforts frequently go unrecorded by the media, and unsupported and unacknowledged by policymakers. So work on peacebuilding at community level can be undermined by policies which ignore these initiatives, and policies may be formulated that lack the key elements necessary for effective development. The experience of peace practitioners over many years supports the conviction that concentrated efforts to link practice and policy are

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[15] Academy for Peace and Development: Dialogue for Peace: A Vote for Peace: How Somaliland Successfully Hosted its First Parliamentary Elections in 35 Years, Hargeisa

needed at all levels and in many regions. The quotation above, from a series of papers about peacebuilding in the self-declared Somaliland, illustrates a key challenge to those concerned with bridging the practice and policy gap.

This paper is designed for peace practitioners. It offers a guide to the process of policy development, suggests ways of planning and engaging at different stages, and highlights the key issues to be considered. The paper is intended to serve as a resource for practitioners, but will also be of interest to policy makers working in the fields of peace, conflict, development, humanitarian assistance and human rights.

The paper draws on the experience of many practitioners engaged in peacebuilding, and in conflict transformation training and learning. There is a particular focus on the Horn of Africa and the learning which has emerged from a programme entitled **Linking Practice to Policy**, which was coordinated by the Coalition for Peace in Africa (COPA) with support from Responding to Conflict (RTC).[16]

It had also been our intention to offer further case studies, models, exercises and other tools which we hoped would be of use for those intervening in conflict situations and working on policy issues around peace processes. Sadly the paper was incomplete at the time of Dekha's death in 2011, and it has not been possible to include everything that was planned. Some material has been included in the text but it will be the task of the next generation of peacebuilders to carry this work forward, to build on the learning, and to adapt, design and develop further models and tools to meet the challenges of the future.

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[16] RTC is an independent conflict transformation organisation and a registered charity based in Birmingham, England that has worked since 1991 to support people and organisations in transforming violent conflict and building lasting peace.

Why does policy matter to peace makers?

Coherent and coordinated intervention and policy strategies are needed to make progress towards peace (Development Assistance Committee of the OECD[17] 2008 Guidance on Evaluating Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities.)

Everyone is affected by policies made at different levels and by different bodies. It is important for those engaged in peace work, whether at a practical level or in the fields of influencing and advocacy, to be aware of the policy environment of their work and the inter-connections between policy and practice.

Policies are formulated at many levels, ranging from the global policy instruments of the UN (e.g. the Refugee Conventions); of regional bodies (e.g. the African Union protocol on refugees, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)[18] policies on conflict early warning) and of states (e.g. Kenya Vision 2030), to the sets of principles and rules governing the approach of non-governmental organisations (NGOs). There are connections, gaps and sometimes contradictions between these.

Policy – a working definition

Policy means different things to different people in different contexts. It is not readily translatable into some languages, although the concept will be familiar in practice. In societies where tradition plays a key role in regulating activities, the idea of policy may be translated into familiar concepts such as *xeer*, the complex system of customary law which has formed the basis for justice and public order in Somalia for generations.

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[17] See www.oecd.org
[18] Intergovernmental Authority on Development see igad.int/

Policy can be said to have the following features:

- Policy is *dynamic*, changing in response to external events. For instance, government policies formulated in response to the 'War on Terror' have had an impact in many countries, including those where the Linking Practice to Policy Programme was piloting interventions. The closing down of communications and money transfer systems isolated Somaliland even further from the outside world. In Kenya and Uganda peace practitioners felt that the 'War on Terror' was creating a polarisation which raised policy issues of governance. For example it became problematic to implement the amnesty law in Uganda when one set of actors was now labelled terrorists. (LPP 2 Final Report)

- New policies may 'emerge': e.g. environmental policy work in response to growing anxieties about the impact of climate change. Issues around potential conflict over resources and policy discussions about 'environmental refugees' are of concern to practitioners working on development and conflict.

- Policy is the subject of *study and debate* – courses are taught in public policy and administration; think tanks are a focus for debate on policy matters. The chief executive of the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) in Ghana has suggested that independent policy research is relatively rare and much needed in Africa.

The *Shorter Oxford Dictionary (1950)* defines policy as follows:
A course of action adopted and pursued by a government, party, ruler, statesman etc;
Here the derivation is traced to the Greek word for citizenship and policy makers are identified primarily as state actors.

In a dictionary published more recently (*Collins Concise Dictionary (1996)*) there is a slight modification of the definition:
A plan of action adopted or pursued by an individual, government, party, business, etc.

The derivation is traced to the Latin for administration. This may reflect the development of policy instruments beyond the institutions of the state, and growing interest in how and where policy is formed, by whom and with what effects (eg the policy departments of large NGOs).

- Policy is often *contested*: e.g. the campaigns challenging government policies over the trade in arms often pit those who want to see greater restrictions on the arms trade against the business people who manufacture and sell the weapons, and government which supports weapons sale for political and economic reasons.

We can conclude that policy may be defined very broadly. It may be a course of action adopted by the state or official bodies. Commonly organisations will have policies regulating their activities which result from official policies and state legislation. The impact may be positive or negative. Individuals, groups and organisations working for social and political change, may seek:

- To change *policy*: The Government of Uganda had to rethink its policy in relation to political security, and economic development of the Karamoja region. It developed integrated policies and programming which provided the framework for innovative ways of engaging with the violence in the region.

- To *influence* policy makers to develop new policies (e.g. initiatives for a national peace policy in Kenya).

- To see that policy is *implemented* on the ground (e.g. involving women in peacebuilding as outlined in UN resolution 1325).

What do we mean by practice?

Practice is a broad term. In this paper it is used to describe the many different actions which may contribute to peacebuilding and conflict transformation. This includes development and relief programmes, rights based activism and interventions of civil society groups and professionals such as teachers, lawyers and doctors. Purposeful, strategic, and conflict-sensitive actions are needed at many levels, by a broad range of actors, in order to truly transform societies that are caught in cycles of violence.

Why link practice to policy?

There is frequently a gap between policy and practice and this can have particularly negative consequences for peacebuilding. There are different actors with different attitudes, competing concerns and goals which may be conflicting. There may also be an inherent tension between the requirements of statebuilding and the role of peacebuilding.

*'**Practice:** action as opposed to theory'*
- Concise Oxford Dictionary 1976

There is a growing call to *'mainstream'*[19] conflict handling skills and experience into all aspects of both development interventions and response to humanitarian crises. Most states have policy instruments governing development and security, but they lack any clearly formulated policy for peacebuilding. However, if peacebuilding is to be effective, it is crucial that practical programmes to transform the violence take place within a policy framework which both guides and regulates the actions.

This policy framework needs, in turn, to be informed by the experience and work of practitioners on the ground that is rooted in the day to day realities of the violence. There need to be meaningful links between practitioners and policy makers. This linkage is vital to the work of conflict transformation at every level from grass roots communities, to national, regional and global decision makers.

In particular, public advocacy for change needs to be closely coordinated with private lobbying – i.e. strategic and usually quiet advocacy with the key people and institutions that can effect (or block) policy changes. Coordination is key and working together collaboratively is necessary in order to have a cumulative impact on the context and the programme being undertaken.

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[19] The concept of mainstreaming has been questioned by critics who would argue that attempts to introduce challenging ideas and actions to the dominant practice will result in dilution and co-option rather than real change

Wajir Peace Initiatives

In response to a particularly violent period in 1992, immediately after the national election and severe drought, a local peace effort began which has worked since not only on stopping the overt violence, but on addressing the root cause of the violent conflicts in Wajir and establishing durable peace in the district.

This group which came to be referred to as 'the Wajir Peace and Development Committee' (WPDC) was started by women (Wajir Women for Peace). It later grew to include elders, youth, business people, religious leaders, parliamentarians, government administration and security forces.

The initiative is now institutionalized, linked to a national peace institution called the National Steering Committee for Peacebuilding and Conflict Management, in the Office of the President in Kenya and Regional protocol of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development's Conflict Early Warning and Response mechanism (IGAD-CEWARN)

In this section we look at a range of insights which have emerged from peacebuilding work, some of the lessons to be drawn and the challenges to be addressed. This is not a comprehensive list and the process of learning is continuous.

Practitioners must find the space between the technical and the transformative

In their Open Letter to *Peacebuilders*[20] Fisher and Zimina suggest that there are contrasting approaches to peacebuilding which can be described as technical and transformative. A technical approach is likely to have a specific focus and objective, an example would be the government of Uganda's disarmament programme to address gun violence in Karamoja. A transformative approach looks at the wider context. An example would be the integrated programme subsequently developed by the Government of Uganda, which places disarmament within an overall development policy approach for the region. The seeds of this development were sown by practitioners pointing out the limited value of the disarmament programme unless those involved had alternative livelihood opportunities to the ones currently obtained through the barrel of a gun.

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[20] In March 2008 'Just Wasting our Time? An Open Letter to Peacebuilders written by Simon Fisher and Lada Zimina sparked debate amongst many practitioners in the conflict transformation/peacebuilding field. The letter, and the response it generated, are being synthesised in a new publication by the Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation 'Peacebuilding at a Crossroads? Dilemmas and Paths for Another Generation'. Berghof Handbook Dialogue No. 7. Edited by Beatrix Schmelzle and Martina Fischer. Berlin: Berghof Research Center, 2009.
It includes the lead article by Simon and Lada (Just Wasting Our Time? Provocative Thoughts for Peacebuilders) and comments by Louis Kriesberg, Diana Chigas/Peter Woodrow, Martina Weitsch, Goran Bozicevic, Barbara Unger/Ulrike Hopp, Martina Fischer; as well as an introduction and final reflection.
The Handbook is freely available to download online at: http://www.berghof-handbook.net/std_page.php?LANG=e&id=5.

Technical and transformative approaches are not necessarily in opposition to one another, but it may be difficult to bring these elements together. Programmes are usually conceived to address specific situations and involve different actors. Finding or making the space for the technical and transformative to come together is a key challenge. This may be achieved through individuals who bridge the gap, through groups concerned with both aspects, and through existing institutions. Above all, the people on the ground have insights from their experience of a conflict. It is our experience that even in the most polarised situations there will be individuals and groups working to find a just and peaceful end to the violence.

The Venn diagram below shows how the space for bridge building people and institutions can close the gap between policy makers and those engaged in practical action at different levels. There are different ways of bridging the gap between policy and practice and finding the transformative space, including:

- Extending mandates – for example it is now recognised by many INGOs that their development as well as their relief programmes need to be conflict sensitive.

- Building on the action of people 'on the edge' – for example the first peace committees created by communities in northern Kenya demonstrate how actions by those who are marginalised by society may create their own ways of addressing conflict. They can offer a model which is not only appropriate for their own situation but may be replicated or adapted for other contexts.

POLICY TO GUIDE

TRANSFORMATIVE SPACE:
Bridge-making people/
groups/ institutions

PRACTICE
Pragmatic Approaches
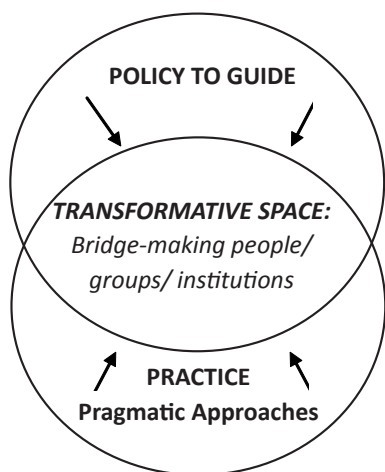
- Supporting development of bridge building institutions such as the Arid Lands Resource Management Project in Kenya to deal with recurrent violence related to water and animal grazing rights.
- Providing space for groupings of individuals to learn and strategize together such the Peacenet network in Kenya and the members of the Somali diaspora.

Building and maintaining the transformative space is not easy, and yet as the examples in this document show, it is both possible and vital to sustained results.

Linking peace practice and policy is distinctive

It is often difficult to establish links between those concerned with policy and those engaged in practical work on the ground. Policy may be formulated in separate departments (e.g. in governments and large INGOs) and programme workers may be submerged in the day to day requirements of their projects. States may be concerned with governance and regard those groups and communities demanding change as a threat to their authority. So examples where policy and practice have come together in peacebuilding initiatives are distinctive, and the learning from this experience is important to inform and encourage other similar initiatives. Practitioners need to take into account the following dilemmas and challenges:

Motivation and priorities

Different actors have different motivations and different levels of authority and power. The maintenance of law and order is a key objective for the state. From this it will be perceived to derive its authority and power. The foreign policy priorities of states may be dictated by a domestic agenda that does not take account of the players and priorities in the international arena.

Confidence building

Trust and confidence are casualties of conflict. Bridge building individuals and groups may be regarded with suspicion by all sides. How are relationships built and sustained? Who confers legitimacy? Those who want to support or become involved in these issues will need to be prepared to confront these difficult questions and to have their legitimacy and motivations challenged.

Different focus, different approaches

Policy and programme work are often managed in separate departments in government and in the larger INGOs. There may be a lack of connection or of agreement between these different areas of focus. There may be different organisational cultures. A consultative approach in one area of government may be regarded in another as too time consuming.

The advent of swift and global means of communication have influenced the way in which politicians consider and make policy. For example, former British Prime Minister Tony Blair has said[21] that when the Labour Party came into power in Britain in 1997, the Cabinet discussed one issue a day. Ten years later they were discussing three different issues a day in morning, afternoon and evening sessions. This reactive, 'soundbite' culture, driven by a perceived need for rapid media response, does not readily fit with the needs of peace practice where there are seldom swift and easy answers.

A further challenge arises from the adversarial conduct of politics in many places. A minister who came to the British foreign office from the UN has commented on the different cultures of the two organisations.

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[21] Quoted in a talk given by Jon Barton, former editor of the Today programme, on November 29th 2008.

At the UN the focus was on trying to find the common ground between different parties. This approach was regarded as weakness in the context of party politics in Britain.

Connecting the local and national to the regional

Regional approaches and coordination are vital when violent conflicts spread across borders. The challenge is to link them to local efforts and to national strategies. Local bodies are vital for programme implementation and national strategies are essential to make them effective. But bringing the two together can be a challenge.

The Regional Peacebuilding Policy of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) is a case in point. IGAD is a regional body of seven East African countries which coordinate their approaches on development and security issues. In 2000, IGAD set up a Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN), realizing that timely intervention to prevent escalation or mitigate the worst effects of violent conflicts was more effective and much cheaper than dealing with the costs (material and human) of a full blown crisis.

In the 1980s it became evident that women refugees were not benefitting as they should from the provision of food, shelter and health care, and in many cases were being actively disadvantaged.

Women refugees were the majority participants in a conference convened in Geneva with representatives from governments, INGOs, CSOs and UNHCR. Following this initiative UNHCR commissioned gender sensitive planning guidelines. (People Oriented Planning).

INGOs, such as Oxfam GB, developed their own gender policies. These policy guidelines in turn provided the framework for practical programmes of response in humanitarian crises.

These states are home to one of the largest pastoralist populations in the world, and one of CEWARN's priority areas has been conflicts among pastoralist communities. CEWARN collects information on livestock rustling, conflicts over grazing and water points, nomadic movements, smuggling and illegal trade, refugees, land mines and banditry.

CEWARN operates to support member states at the national level. In some member states there is disconnect and confusion at the national levels on how to engage on the local cross border process. The confusion arises from the varying roles and functions of stakeholders, their mandates and approaches, and the institutional home for the initiatives. Other member states have harmonized national strategies and protocol and linked them up to regional policy through dialogue and planning together with stakeholders.

In 2008 in Uganda the Conflict Early Warning and Emergency Response Unit in consultation with CEWARN secretariat worked with stakeholders in the Karamoja cluster on the Uganda side to agree on the response and coordination structures. Such processes have come about after observation of many conflicting and competing structures that were not bearing fruit.

Policy and practice: a two way process

Practice can influence policy development and the process of influencing can also have an impact on practice. The starting point may be less important than understanding and working with the connections. An example can be given from the field of humanitarian response in refugee situations, where the practice of agencies regarding treatment of women refugees has significantly changed over the past 20 years (see text box). Experience on the ground led to demand for policy instruments to regulate practice. In turn the introduction of guidelines and a policy framework for action gave practitioners the tools to change practice.

Deep rooted conflict is recurrent and cyclical

In the conflicts mentioned in this paper there is no end point, and it has been important to develop mechanisms to intervene in the cycle. There will be repetition, for example, of violence around trigger moments such as drought, scarcity and political events. Elections are a known moment of potential conflict in many countries. Kenya has experienced a cycle of violence, before, during and after national elections since 1979. This has been carried out by organised militia of different political and social groups and has taken the form of violent attacks on opposing communities. Although the contested issues were political in nature, the violence took on a social dimension with the targeting of specific ethnic groups. The violence has had an impact beyond national borders, with the whole of Eastern Africa feeling the effects.

The diagram below shows the nested nature of the Kenyan national crisis after the contested presidential results of December 2007.
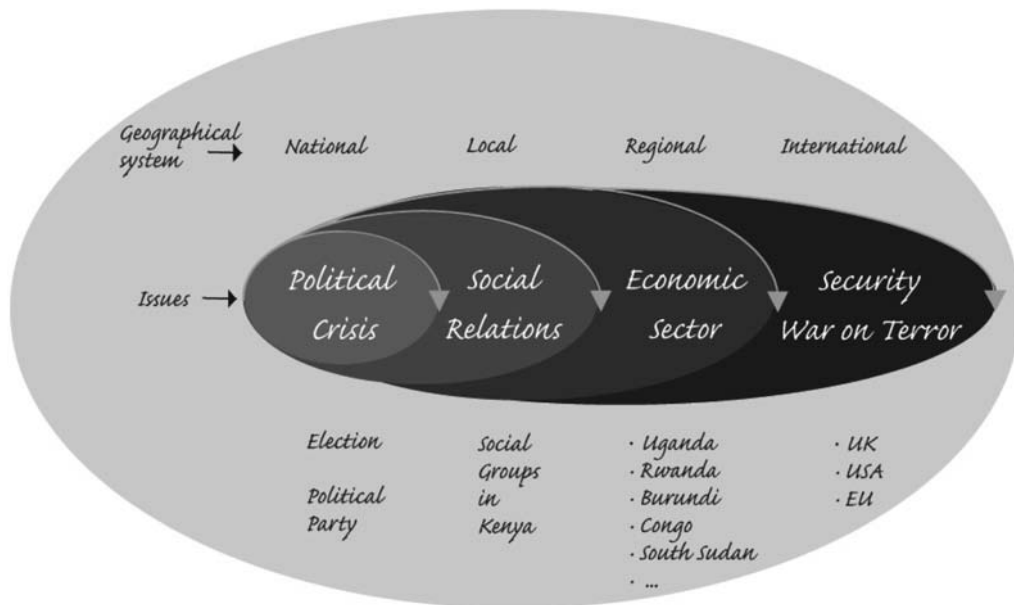
Failure, Tenacity and Hope

Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better.
– Samuel Beckett (1983) Worstward Ho

Building peace is a voyage of exploration. The results of policies and programmes cannot always be predicted, when new ground is being covered. We should be ready to acknowledge and analyse the unpredictable impacts rather than see them as falling outside the goals and plans.

Transforming conflict and building peace take place in a context of violence, suspicion, uncertainty mistrust. There are many risks and dangers. Failure is discouraging but not surprising. However, politicians, community leaders, government officials may fear loss of reputation or position, and it may require courage and determination to find in failure an opportunity for learning.

Patience and persistence are key principles that inform the day to day practice of building peace. During the Pokot/Samburu Mediation in Kenya in 2006 the Provincial Commissioner of Rift Valley Province mentioned how important it is to engage with the peace process continuously, even when it is not bearing fruits immediately. He mentioned that 34 meetings were organised. It was the 35th meeting that brokered the peace. This is still not the end of the process but rather the beginning of the implementation.

When violence recurs, when peace processes fall through, practitioners and policy makers alike may doubt their capacities and despair of the possibility of progress. It is difficult to keep hope alive. It is an unusual person who can do this alone in difficult circumstances – we find hope together.

The key to this process is working as a team with different roles and functions, and complementing each other. In any local mediation effort, there are networks of networks with a mediative capacity[22] supporting the processes which include many single events. When one individual gives up another team member picks up the baton and thus networks sustain the process. In 2005 in Elwak of the Gedo region in Somalia, the local religious leaders who were the mediators to a political conflict between Garreh and Marehan were supported by a local coordination group, who in turn were supported by a strategy group. Sometimes sustained home telephone support can be given to any group who would like to reflect when the process is almost stalling, or to mentor individuals needing support.

Policies and practice for peace are long term

Peacebuilding is an ongoing process. There is no end point. Peace practitioners are in there for the 'long haul'. This can be problematic in obtaining 'buy in' from policy makers who may have a short time frame, such as the term of political office. INGOs, too, usually have a planning framework of five years at the most; grant aid seldom extends beyond three years. These planning and funding policies, often designed to provide an organisation with flexibility and to avoid tying up future funding, can seriously affect reconstruction and development initiatives which need long term support. There is a task here of influencing the policies of funding bodies. Peace practitioners with a long term horizon and continuity of experience have a body of knowledge and learning of inestimable value to policy makers.

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[22] The Moral Imagination, the Art and Soul of Building Peace , John Paul Lederach 2005 Oxford University Press inc, pages 94-97

Conclusion

It has been argued that there is substantial documentation on war and a body of theory about its causes and conduct, while this is not the case for peace. There are several reasons why this may be the case. Peacebuilding usually emerges from a serious situation and an urgent need, which requires immediate action and often prolonged intervention. Action rather than reflection is the priority. When urgent action is no longer needed the practitioner may be close to burnout and in need of rest rather than reflection. So learning remains anecdotal rather than systematically recorded and theorised. Peace studies are a relatively recent field for research, and interest in exploring and analysing the characteristics of peace practices has been limited. There has been very little investment by states in developing and supporting peace processes in comparison with the enormous expenditure on defence, security and the pursuit of wars.[23]

A particularly compelling reason for a lack of theory on peace is that while war and violence are recognisable, the opposite is not the case. Peace remains a work in progress. There is an increasing interest, among multi-lateral agencies, at universities, within states to find better ways to break cycles of violent conflict. Despite the complexity, peace practitioners need to find ways to engage, to share their knowledge and to advocate for better approaches, better institutions, and better policies. We can point to 'pieces of peace' in different places; 'peace writ large' is less easy to find. In the past century, there have been two world wars; world peace remains a vision to which we continue to aspire.

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[23] In a talk given by Liz Carmichael to the Unicorn Group in Oxford c. 2008.

In Section 1 we noted that linking peace practice and policy is a demanding, distinctive, and complex task. There are no simple causes and no simple solutions to conflict. There are many different actors whose stake in the conflict needs to be identified, understood and worked with. This may require different institutional frameworks and different approaches. There are no blueprints. In this section we shall look at a number of issues which are important for all involved in processes and policies to transform violent conflict and build just and sustainable peace.

What is the Problem? Problem identification, understanding and analysis

It is simplistic to attribute the causes of the conflict and insecurity in Karamoja to 'backwardness' and the availability of guns.
– Odhiambo, 2003[24]

Conflicts are usually a result of a complex set of factors. We need to identify the causes and understand the different perspectives of those involved in order to be able to respond effectively. There are seldom simple solutions. The starting point for peace work is often a violent incident or conflict. In the case of the example above the initial response of the government of Uganda was to aim to stop the violence through a disarmament programme. By removing the weapons they sought to end the violence. This was not a voluntary programme and the violence did not stop. The causes of the conflict were not so straightforward.

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[24] Odhiambo, Michael Ochieng (2003): The Karamoja Conflict: Origins, Impact and Solutions, Oxfam GB.

Odhiambo criticises a particular perspective taken on the Karamoja conflict, which he sees as resulting on the one hand from a prejudice against pastoralists who are regarded *as primitive* and backward and on the other from an assumption that the availability of guns is the cause for their use in conflict. Karamoja, he says, has been treated as a war zone where the principles of democratic governance do not apply.[25] He goes on to say that we should 'open our minds to look into multiple dimensions for the root causes of conflict'. This detailed analysis leads to the conclusion that this is a problem which requires a regional approach. Thus the analysis provides a framework for appropriate response.

In the final report on the Karamoja Integrated Disarmament and Development Programme (GoU 2007), it was proposed that the programme should be devised within an overall development framework, in line with the government's policy objectives for poverty eradication. There is recognition that the earlier disarmament programme had had limited success, that there was a need to build on and understand pastoralism rather than attempt to replace it, and that in addition to the military, other institutions and policy actors are necessary to ensure human security. The cross border dimension is also acknowledged.

Odhiambo had previously argued that perhaps the greatest problem with governance in Karamoja was the 'absence of a clear and committed government policy'. The integrated development programme proposal met this criticism. The challenge continues to be implementation on the ground, to turn policy into practice. A September 2011 review done by the regional body IGAD-CEWARN[26] in collaboration with the national Conflict Early Warning and Response Unit of Uganda noted that:

> *"Timely alerts and responses have contributed to a significant decrease in the number of raids and human deaths, but not enough*

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[25] Ibid p29
[26] Inter-Governmental Authority on Development – Conflict Early Warning and Response mechanism.

had been done through government peace and development programs to ensure inclusion of youth or provide education and employment opportunities."

A truth not the truth: Exercise in problem identification

Often it is difficult even to begin discussions to identify the problem because stakeholders come with strongly fixed ideas about what is wrong. As a warm-up to a problem analysis, it may therefore be useful to develop a version of the following exercise. The statements below may all contain a truth about the situation but are not sufficient in themselves for problem analysis. They could be used in a training workshop to help participants recognise the different facets of a problem leading to violent conflict.

Method:

Form two concentric circles, with equal numbers of participants. Participants face one another in pairs. The facilitator calls out the first statement and participants have 2 minutes to discuss with their partner. Then the outer circle is asked to move round one step – so that there are different pairs to discuss the next statement. At the end participants are asked for feedback.

Statements:

There are too many guns and knives
The youth lack discipline
The old ways aren't followed any more
There has always been conflict and there always will be
Outsiders come in and stir things up
There are criminal elements who profit from the conflict
The police see us as a community of troublemakers
There is no justice from government
These people are ungovernable

Is power the problem?

One of the key areas for our analysis is the question of where power lies. In the face of protracted conflict and violence there may be a general sense of powerlessness. The people on the ground feel unsupported by the policy makers, who in turn feel that the conflict has escalated beyond their control and can only be handled by the security forces. How can the stakeholders in a conflict be empowered to act for positive change?

Power and Influence are closely related. Power is the potential to influence others, to change their behaviour and attitudes, and perhaps also to influence change structures or systems (context) in which conflicts happen. Sources of power include:

Position or Authority this may be backed by rules, norms or enforced by the state

Control of Resources such as land, water, forest, materials, technology, and money

Economic Power economic systems, international financial institutions, multi-national corporations

Networks/Relationships not what you know but who you know that counts

Expertise and Knowledge

Control of Information

Media Power derives from access to/use of information, how this is regarded by public and politicians

Personal Power qualities of an individual, charm, charisma, sincerity, and reputation in this field of work

Societal Power social attitudes to different groups

– **RTC (2005): ACTS core topic paper:** *Conflict Power and Change: Engaging with Actors. Systems, Structures and Policies*

How we understand power will help to identify possibilities for intervention. Power does not reside in a single individual or group, but in the channels that connect them and in the web of interlinked relationships at the social, political and economic levels. Exploring those relationships is an important part of our analysis of the problem – not only the causes and the actors but the interaction between them.

Power has been defined in many ways. Kenneth Boulding said power is *the ability to change the future*. Some thinkers make a distinction between three kinds of power:

- **Power over** - the ability to dominate another person or group-as in *I have power over her*. This means, I have the ability to make her do what I want her to do.
- **Power to** - refers to abilities. Sources of this kind of power are intellect, resources, knowledge, stamina, etc. These resources give some people the power to accomplish things that others cannot.
- **Power with** - the ability to work with others to get something done by cooperation.

Although many people tend to think of power only in terms of *power over*, often the most effective conflict strategy is a mix of all three types of power.

In the text box opposite is a list, drawn up by the late peace practitioner, Steve Williams, of potential sources of different forms of power. Exploring power dynamics, sources of power, and views of power is a vital part of any effort to end violent conflicts.

Recurrent conflict as an opportunity

An immediate crisis may result in reactive measures which, as we have seen above, are of limited value and may cause more problems than

the one they seek to address. A cycle of recurrent crises may produce conditions in which reconsideration of policy and calls for change are more likely to be heard.

Who is involved? Identification of actors/stakeholders in the conflict

To be clan blind is to be conflict blind.
– Somali Proverb

In complex violent conflict situations involving many individuals and groups, identifying and engaging all the interested parties can become a challenging task, yet it is vital for the success of any engagement. Just as there are many different factors shaping a conflict, so there are many people who are involved in a conflict, either directly or indirectly. Some are more likely to be recognised than others and some views will be given more weight than others. Roles of different groups may be officially recognised or officially ignored. Frequently conflict is seen to be a security issue to be addressed by the official actors – government and political leadership backed by the police and army. Community leaders may be called in, but many others affected by and involved in the conflict may be excluded.

Those often **excluded** from formal peace negotiations are:

- ***Women of all ages*** – Women have different spheres of influence (public or private participation, formal and informal). Their effectiveness in influencing the peace process will depend on which spheres they are able to use and engage in. But the policy process recognises only one element of the spheres of influence and engagement – the public and the formal. Women often come together in informal groups to deal with conflicts in their communities, and therefore the gap between work on the ground and policy formulation remains. UN Resolution 1325 provides an

international impetus to develop policies for women's inclusion in peacebuilding at all levels.

- **Young men** – Young men may be regarded as the problem, the key perpetrators of armed violence, or urban knife and gun crime. They may be targeted specifically – with voluntary or forced disarmament measures for example. However, they may not be included in initiatives to address the conflict, to involve them in policy debate which takes their needs into account.

- **Religious and traditional leadership** – Religious and traditional leaders have influence in their communities even if they are bypassed or regarded with suspicion by officialdom. Under the Barre regime which controlled Somalia from 1969 to 1991 traditional leaders and structures were not officially recognised. However, they did not disappear and proved an important resource in establishing stable governance in the north of the country, Somaliland. Dekha Ibrahim Abdi and Adan Haji Yusuf have pointed out[27] that traditional Somali leadership structures such as the kingdoms are indispensable for social, economic and political relations, and are a genuine source of legitimacy. They cannot be ignored. However, the challenge is to emphasise their representative, inclusive and transparent features while remaining aware of their exclusive, discriminatory and often highly politicised nature.

- **Minority or marginalised groups** – Particular groups may be marginalised because they are not regarded as the major players, or are viewed with suspicion. If left out these groups may become spoilers, or their continued exclusion can sow the seeds for new types of violent conflict. For this reason, in Somaliland it was recommended that the minority clans should be represented in both Houses.

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[27] Dekha Ibrahim Abdi and Adan Haji Yusuf: *Linking Practice to Policy Report, May 2008*

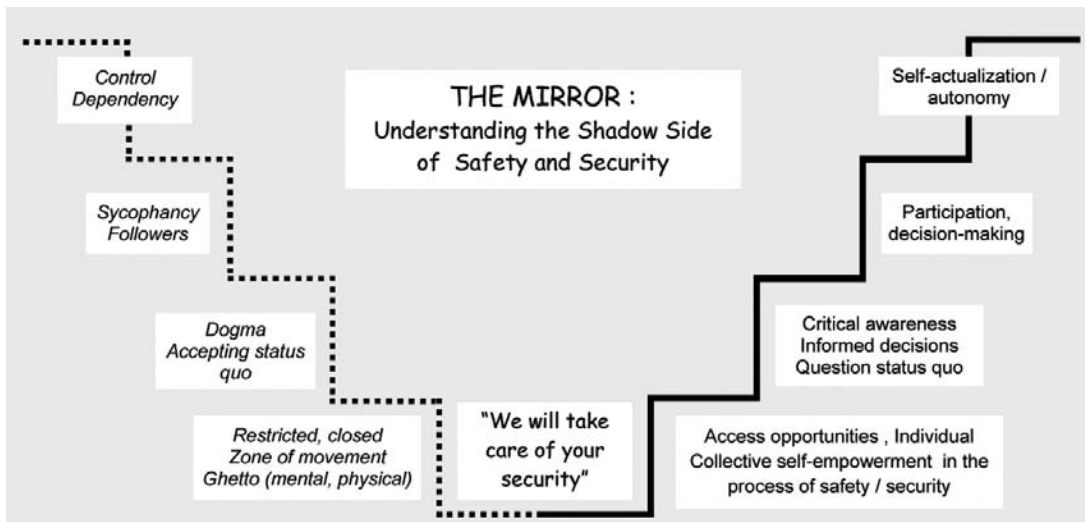### *A place for all – Empowerment and Mindsets*

Peace is a collective responsibility.
– Motto Wajir Peace Committee, Kenya and Quaker Cape Town Centre
South Africa

Part of the challenge of peacebuilding is overcoming established mindsets and assumptions. As mentioned above, there will almost certainly be particular groups who claim ownership of safety and security issues – most often the government supported by police or military, but possibly also other actors such as political parties, militias, or traditional and religious elites. They are supported in their views by habits or cultural attitudes which marginalize ordinary people from the process, with the reassuring message that *'if you just leave it to us, we will take care of you.'* It is often only when the conflict has recurred many times, or come to seem completely unsolvable that people are willing to step out of these roles and admit that something new needs to be tried. This will involve changes in traditional relationships and ways of doing things, in order to bring everyone into a common framework and a sense of shared responsibility for safety and security.

Empowerment starts with a change in thinking – a questioning of accepted attitudes and beliefs about how the world works and the how individuals and groups relate to each other. The Mirror[28] tool (see next page) shows on the right hand side the steps and process of self and collective empowerment in the process of safety and security. However there is a shadow side on the left hand side of the dotted step, which shows how society and individuals can be disempowered if a group takes over the role of providing their safety and security.

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[28] Adapted by Dekha Ibrahim Abdi from the COPA Peace Eduiction Workshop in Gitega, Burndi in 2005, with thanks to Sue Williams for her assistance.

THE MIRROR :
Understanding the Shadow Side
of Safety and Security

Control
Dependency

Sycophancy
Followers

Dogma
Accepting status
quo

Restricted, closed
Zone of movement
Ghetto (mental, physical)

"We will take
care of your
security"

Self-actualization /
autonomy

Participation,
decision-making

Critical awareness
Informed decisions
Question status quo

Access opportunities , Individual
Collective self-emperment in the
process of safety / security

Understanding the interests of various parties

It can be useful to ask, *who has an interest in this situation?* or *who would be affected by changes in this situation?* Any person or social entity that falls into this category is, potentially, a party to the conflict. Yet because there are variations in the level of involvement, parties often assume different roles and functions in the conflict and peace process.

- Primary parties have a direct interest in a conflict and actively pursue goals designed to promote their own interests. They are acutely aware of the conflict situation because it has a direct effect on their lives. Although having an interest in the outcomes, people in this position can become committed to working for peace and become powerful voices for influencing others within their own group.

- Secondary parties have a stake in the outcome of the situation but may or may not perceive that there is a conflict and may or may

not decide to play an active role or be represented in any decision-making process. Sometimes secondary parties are key either to facilitating, spoiling or enforcing an agreement.

- Third parties or intermediaries generally intervene to help facilitate the resolution of conflict issues. They may be seen to be impartial and have no stake in any particular outcome, or they may take a side but still be viewed as legitimate facilitators by the primary and secondary parties.

The role of lawyers

In identifying the stakeholders in the conflict it is important not only to include those who are usually marginalized, but also to take into consideration the potential roles and contributions of different professional sectors. For example, lawyers are a body of professionals who can play a significant role in the formulation of policy. Groups in conflict often attempt to use the judicial system for some sort of resolution – but frustration with this process or perception that the judicial system is unfair can deepen the conflict divide. Alternative dispute resolution or out of court settlement have sometimes been introduced to reduce the backlog of cases congesting the Judiciary.

Lawyers have also realised that, win/lose approaches do not lead to peace between parties; transformation of the disputes is what is needed. The judiciary is often ill equipped to deal with conflict rooted in social and political issues. In its focus on prosecution and punishment of individuals, it may ignore the reality that society is not dealing with the criminal act of an individual but rather a collective action of a group, who have a grievance. Such situations have led the professional body to seek alternatives and work towards policy that will address the gap in the current systems.

Involving the educators – teachers and students

Educators also need to be engaged, as children too are affected by conflict and have opinions to share and a role to play. Peace Education is a process that helps prepare society to understand their conflict context and make an informed conceptual shift. The Linking Practice to Policy programme introduced the concept of peace education into schools in Wajir and Mandera in Kenya. Teachers and students engaged in monitoring conflicts in the classroom and recording how these arose and were then handled. Materials were produced in Swahili and Somali as well as English. The English language curriculum was analysed to identify aspects likely to reinforce discrimination and negative ethnic and gender stereotypes. Teachers and civil society groups from the Somalia capital Mogadishu and from Gedo and lower Juba region bordering with Kenya worked with Kenyan counterparts on a peace education programme for youth in and out of school. Such a process can develop a framework for continuous learning and adaptation.

The influence of the media

The media may play a significant role, giving space to official views, or particular sections of society. It may demonise a group spreading damaging myths and rumours. The radio station Mille Collines is now notorious for the role it played in the Rwanda genocide, stirring

Media for Peacebuilding

In Belet Hawa Gedo Somalia, Radio Mandeeq focuses on building peace across the three states of Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia. It dedicates time to peace songs and drama, and also provides a space for debates on topical conflict and peace issues. It acts as an information clearing space by checking into rumours that have potential for escalating violence in the fragile context.

One example is the case of when vehicles or other goods are stolen in Kenya and information could not be passed to the Kenya authorities due to closure of the border. People use the radio to announce the recovery of the items. This builds confidence and slows the need for revenge.

up and inciting listeners to commit atrocities. Perhaps less well known are the media players trying to build community and broadcasting messages of peace.

Working with the police

Workshops in Northern Kenya brought police together with community members to discuss the impact of security policies as they were implemented on the ground, and how to improve these practices and draw lessons of good practice from other African contexts. A woman police officer from South Africa participated, contributing experience of community policing initiatives. She also provided a significant role model for Kenyans in whose country women have a largely administrative role in the police force.

Conflict and the private sector

The private sector is affected by conflict. In Somalia where the state infrastructure had broken down, some private sector initiatives continued, drawing on legal and institutional frameworks from elsewhere when there was no functioning equivalent locally. Private sector engagement is an area that is frequently ignored by both civil society and government, yet business people have a strong motivation to create conditions in which they can continue to trade. This can be positive, for example, in providing enabling mechanisms where there was no institutional framework for financial services.

However, it must also be recognised that conflict can also provide the conditions in which destructive big business can grow. This includes not only highly publicised acts of hi-jacking relief aid, kidnapping for ransom and piracy at sea, but also irresponsible extraction of oil and minerals which despoils the environment and pays no regard to the needs of the communities. This may be because there is no government regulation

to check the damage caused or the government may have a vested interest in the extractive industry.

Each stakeholder in a conflict will bring their own needs and interests. Their strengths may include critical connections, their constraints may include an inability, fear or unwillingness to engage. It is frequently unrealistic to try to bring everyone round the table, but absence from the discussions does not mean that the concerns of these stakeholders can be overlooked. Persons affected by the conflict and violence are a resource for peace in the complex process of relationship building.

Insiders and outsiders

Every conflict involves both insiders and outsiders. They will have different strengths and constraints. Insiders will read situations differently. For example, during the electoral violence in Kenya a car carrying members of different sides in the conflict was recognised by an insider to be an indicator of positive developments. This local knowledge of clan membership is less accessible to outsiders. Humanitarian INGOs aim to be impartial actors and may be able to act as bridging or mediating bodies. However, it should not be assumed that because an outside organisation regards its position as impartial that this view is shared by other parties.

Who has the mandate and legitimacy to intervene? Dekha Ibrahim and Adan Haji Yussuf, in their reflections on the LPP programme, observed that valuable resources in time, money and mental energy are lost in the process of agreeing who has a mandate and the legitimacy to intervene, and which approach should be used. Sometimes the conflict is not about the violence but about the approach to use, the structure to intervene and the level at which this should happen. Which should intervene first and which follow?

Diaspora organisations may be both insiders and outsiders

It was members of the Somali Diaspora who initiated the first moves towards peacebuilding which led to more stability in Somaliland. The Ugandan (Acholi) diaspora has acted both in the formal and informal process in supporting the intervention to end the violence in Northern Uganda. Kacoke Madit work as an avenue for information gathering and dissemination, as a pressure group, and as an institution to garner and organise the support of the diaspora with policy makers both within and outside Uganda. The perception, need and world view of the diaspora and those left in the conflict theatre are not always similar. That can pose challenges in harnessing the energy of both so as to bring about positive change in the conflict context.

The 'spoilers'

At some point and in some situations it may be necessary to engage with those groups who are seen to be 'the spoilers' and who may have a vested interest in continuing the conflict. This is a challenge. Often such meetings will be held in secret and 'off the record', for actors for whom public meetings would be seen as condoning particular sides in the conflict. Such dialogue may be crucial to achieve policy change. Practitioners on the ground may be well placed, through local connections and experience to contribute to such engagement. This can be challenging and risky when the broad policy environment is hostile to the concept of 'talking to terrorists'. For local NGOs dependent on external funding there may be a threat to their funding support.
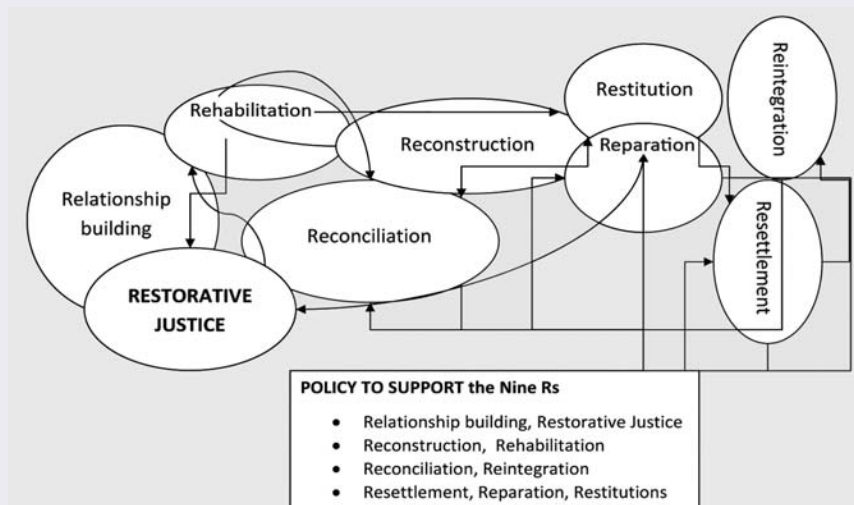
Ourselves

Last, but not least, we need to be aware of where we stand in a conflict. Whether we are simply working in a conflict situation, or directly involved in trying to do something about it, it is important to know

and acknowledge our own positions, perceptions, feelings, hopes and fears, as these too will have an effect on the situation and influence the players.

Mapping the complexity – some exercises

Policy needs to be comprehensive and address the interconnected nature of the issues. There are nine Rs (see below) which policy must take into account. Policy must be rooted into practice by involving persons affected by the violence. Mr Njenga Miri DC Nakuru working with IDPs in Kenya's Rift Valley said that the most important is building rapport and relationships with persons affected by the violence and seeing them as a resource not victims. Policy provides guidelines but it is important to be pragmatic. The approach should be one of empowerment and joint learning with those affected by the violence. That is the key to the process of resettlement which should not be a mechanical process of moving a community from one spot to another. The process is cyclical.

POLICY TO SUPPORT the Nine Rs
- Relationship building, Restorative Justice
- Reconstruction, Rehabilitation
- Reconciliation, Reintegration
- Resettlement, Reparation, Restitutions

This diagram with its double loops and intricate lines of connection and feedback aims to demonstrate the key features of peace policy and practice and their inter-relationship. The diagram shows the complex nature of the process of reconstructing societies affected by violence.

The Nine Rs

Relationship building is at the heart of peace practice. It is sensitive, takes time and is a continuing process. It is a key feature of the case studies described in this paper. The Wajir peace process began with a group of women from within the community. They went on to build relationships with all who were affected by the violence. The Wajir Peace and Development Committee became the mechanism to maintain these relationships and to make connections more widely. In South Africa the Community Policing Forum provided a space where the old and hostile relationships of the apartheid era could be addressed and new ways of relating and working together were developed. The peace process which led to the establishment of stability in the self-declared state of Somaliland was founded on extensive dialogue through which relationships were made between many stakeholders. In Uganda the broken relationships between the child soldiers and their families were restored.

It has been said that to achieve peace you must first seek justice. **Restorative justice** involves both perpetrators and victims and tries to repair the harm that has been done. Truth commissions have offered one entry point. The traditional cleansing process described in the Ugandan case study (p 115) offered a way to heal the wounds of a community torn by conflict and led to the **Reintegration** of the child soldiers back into their families.

However **Reconciliation** is hard to achieve without serious and material recognition of wrongs that have been suffered. There may be a need for **Reparation** and **Restitution** before there can be **Rehabilitation**. **Reconstruction** may involve new forms of governance, as in the case of Somaliland or the reconstruction of police community relationships in post – apartheid South Africa. It may include provision of options such as **Resettlement** for people displaced by conflict. In the case study from Uganda it is suggested that the lack of resources for resettlement has been an obstacle in implementing the amnesty though some of the other 'Rs' were put in place.

As the diagram illustrates, there is no linear process, nor one simple set of linkages. It is the interconnection between all these factors that is important, and there may be many iterations. Reconstructing societies affected by violent conflict is not straightforward; appreciating the complexity is the key to tackling the issues.

ANALYSIS OF STAKEHOLDERS AND ACTORS

In undertaking any peace work, one should be able to identify and acknowledge all stakeholders in the peacebuilding and conflict management process. This is critical because they affect the conflict in diverse ways and at different levels. They should therefore be involved in determining the direction of resolving conflicts. *Stakeholders or actors are defined as those individuals or groups who are directly or indirectly involved in the conflict and have some significant stake in its outcome*.

Categories of Stakeholders/Actors
Primary Stakeholders are those whose goals are, or are perceived by them to be incompatible and who interact directly in pursuit of their respective goals. They are the direct investors in the conflict.

*Secondary stakeholder*s are those who are affected directly by the outcome of the conflict but who do not feel themselves to be directly involved. As the conflict progresses, secondary parties may become primary and primary could become secondary.

Interested stakeholders are those who have interest in the conflict. They stand to benefit in the outcomes whether peaceful or not. The difference between interested stakeholders and secondary stakeholders is that the interest stakeholders suffer no direct impact of the conflict at least in the short and medium term.

Elements of Stakeholder Analysis

In conducting a stakeholder analysis, due consideration should be given to the following elements, among others:

- *Relationship*. What is the interaction between the stakeholders?

- *Agendas/Power*. What are the agendas of key stakeholders for conflict and for peace?

- *Needs*. What are the needs of the different stakeholders? Which needs are opposing and overlapping?

- *Power*. What is the cumulative power of stakeholders promoting peace or conflict?

- *Actions*. What actions are the different stakeholders undertaking to promote peace or conflict? What is the cumulative power of actions for peace or conflict?

Source: *Government of Kenya, Standard guidelines and terms of reference for peace committees, Ministry of State for Provincial administration and Internal Security, National Steering Committee on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management, October 2008*

Institutional/legal frameworks

There is no one comprehensive legislation that can address conflict management exhaustively since conflict is a social justice and human development issue.

– Ethiopian delegation visiting Kenya in 2007 on an exchange visit to study policy development organised by Pact Ethiopia

As we have seen above the problems of violence and conflict are complex and there are multiple actors with multiple interests. In every situation, peace practitioners need to start where they are, to see what resources and opportunities might be available at the local, national, and regional level. The first questions to ask are: What exists? How does it work?

Limitations of existing frameworks

A number of factors can constrain or limit the effectiveness of initiatives to address violent conflict.

Lack of professional knowledge and experience at the state level on how to engage with a dynamic that is complex and multi-level

We have seen this in the example quoted earlier of the disarmament programme in Karamoja, where initial efforts failed because officials did not pay attention to the root causes of armed violence or support alternative livelihoods for the young men most likely to be drawn into the violence.

Lack of guidelines or effective mechanisms for engaging with the context

Since political transition in 1992, Kenyan civil society has been active in addressing the cyclical violence affecting various parts of the country. The existence of community level peace committees in some areas provided a model and mechanism at the level of local government, but before the establishment of the National Steering Committee in Kenya in 2004 there was no mechanism at national level specifically charged with peacebuilding and conflict management. While such mechanisms are not going to solve all problems, they are vitally important in setting 'norms, values, and principles to guide interventions,' as the final National Policy notes in its first section.

Different situations, different approaches

What works with one set of actors in one part of a country may not work in another area of the same country. For example, the mechanisms of consultation based on traditional forms of peacebuilding which have created a stable governance system in Somaliland have not proved transferable to the whole of Somalia. So the benefits of a stable state are limited by the instability of the overall context.

Official frameworks are not enough

In Uganda, civil society groups lobbied diligently for a blanket amnesty in order to convince the fighters – many of whom had been kidnapped as children – to lay down arms and come back to their communities. However, the amnesty law was not sufficient on its own to achieve the re-integration of fighters from the rebel forces back into society. Communities found they needed to engage with other social processes designed to address the trauma of the violence - such as traditional cleansing rituals. The amnesty law also suffered from lack of

My advice and what I learned is that organisations have to continue working on practical peace, even in the absence of a policy framework, then develop the policy with other organisations, community groups and government agencies, refine the policy framework from the lessons from day to day practice as you work and respond to emerging needs.

- Daniel Kiptugen, Peace and conflict Adviser, Oxfam GB 2006

resources. While the framework was a positive achievement, there was not enough money to provide the promised resettlement packages.

Contradictions between conflicting legislation

National or local peace policies can be undermined by decisions and events taking place at a higher level. A recent example of this can be seen in the impact on national frameworks of the international 'war on terror'. How can the amnesty law in Uganda be applied to those who are declared 'terrorists'? What kind of engagement is possible with groups which have been proscribed under anti-terror legislation? Who can initiate the discussions with them and how?

Attitudes of exclusivity

There are no blue prints for this type of work and each situation has its own unique characteristics. However, there are likely to be common threads which can be identified, trying out and building on the experience from other situations with similar components. So the 'finger print' approach which says 'our situation is entirely different and we cannot learn from any others' – is also to be avoided.

Approaches to conflict and violence

Peacebuilding is no longer a preserve of government
– Mr Wilson Njenga, Laikipia District Commissioner Nanyuki,
Kenya 2005

Approaches to conflict and violence are shaped by many different factors. These include not only the different contexts in which they arise and the different institutional frameworks available but also the different analyses of the issue and theories of conflict and change.

Government may regard the use of military force as a necessary and effective tool. Judicial systems may offer processes which aim to be impartial. However, this may be contested by parties to the conflict. For example there are differing perspectives on the role of the International Criminal Court in regard to the war in Northern Uganda, with some seeing ICC involvement as ensuring justice while others see it as undermining the community's efforts to end the violence and reintegrate the child soldiers. Traditional approaches may be crucial in re-building trust and community cohesion but may also require adaptation to changing circumstances in order to be more inclusive: in the case of restoring traditional peace processes in Somaliland women and youth had to be included in the process—not only traditional (male) leaders. Initiatives made by faith bodies provide important leadership and guidance for their adherents but may not hold weight outside their constituencies.

All parties need to be open to new ideas and willing to contemplate changing not only attitudes and assumptions but also ways of working. Geoffrey Lemiso, the conflict management officer of the Arid Lands Resource Management Project in Kenya described the way in which approaches to conflict over livestock rustling, water and grazing resources changed. First the security sector needed to open up its closed information systems and move away from extractive information

gathering, in which the community was used like informers, into a more open relationship in which the community was regarded as a resource. Links were established, building relationships and trust in the community. In this way action on early warning information became beneficial for both society and the state.

As the above example illustrates, building trust and confidence is an important task. In Kenya the government was initially suspicious of the NGOs and did not include them in the National Steering Committee on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management established by the office of the President in 2001. NGOs felt intimidated and left out, so that when government opened up in 2003 the NGOs in turn felt suspicious about the government's intentions.

Daniel Kiptugen, at that time with Oxfam GB, suggested that in the end the National Steering Committee provided an important institutional link, becoming the basis for building long term relationships, and offering a channel to build understanding of different ways of working. Under this umbrella it was possible to create new operating systems and develop a new organisational culture. This contributed to the policy framework for peacebuilding in Kenya. An example of this new co-operative approach in Kenya was the 2006 mediation process for the Samburu/Pokot conflict. Government acted as guarantor to the process which was facilitated by civil society actors.

It is important to identify the expertise of the stakeholders and define their roles and distinctive contribution to transforming the conflict. The following guidelines are suggested:

• Government convenes meetings, implements agreements, enforces what is agreed, monitors the context, develops guidelines, process and procedures as future reference

- Community engages in mobilisation and solidarity, provides resources such as insider mediators, facilitators to unblock processes.
- Civil society organisations (CSOs) may provide logistics, training, research and learning.
- International actors may be invited to intervene. These may be drawn from a wide spectrum, from the UN and regional bodies such as the African Union, from individual governments with foreign policy goals, to INGOs and peace organisations. In the Kenya post-election violence of 2008 Kofi Annan and a group of African eminent persons played a role. International actors may monitor elections, or accompany those at risk in a conflict (e.g. Peace Brigades in Colombia, the Ecumenical Accompaniers programme in Israel/ Palestine). Their efficacy will depend on the credibility that they have on the ground.

Conclusion

Violent conflict is transformed when all the actors are empowered to participate in the peacebuilding process and aim for a sustainable outcome. This involves conscious linkages between policy makers and those on the ground. Organisations need to engage in processes which link policy and practice in order to influence peace processes. In doing so, they will have to deal with issues of inclusion, trust, prejudice, and entrenched attitudes and ways of working.

Implicit in this is the question of where power lies and the nature of that power. Where relationships are asymmetrical the more powerful partner may be perceived to be co-opting rather than including others in the peace process. The outcomes are likely to be contested. However, even when the system as a whole may seem immoveable it may be possible to find entry points at the level of the subsystem. This has been the experience in some of the examples quoted in this paper.

Exercise: Steps towards a sound peace policy development process

Steps	Questions to consider
Conduct a Conflict analysis, participatory, comprehensive, awareness of the political climate and mood, looking at issues at hand and the underlying, as well as systemic, and links to wider geographical context	Does the political climate/mood support participatory activities? Is the position of government proactive/inclusive/ defensive/ hostile/ indifferent? How much democratic space is there?
Decide on a steering group: organisations, networks and institutions to guide, engage with the process, a collaborative framework of all stakeholders	Who convenes the steering group? Government/an intermediary organisation? Which organisations have credibility? And with whom? Are some parties excluded? Do some parties refuse participation? How can their views be accessed?
Ensure that the effort is rooted in existing experience and expertise of those affected by the conflict and those working to transform it	How are the conflict affected groups enabled to contribute experience? How can community level peacebuilding be 'scaled up'?
Advocate, influence and educate those responsible for formulation of the peace policy, private and public process of engagement	What channels exist for advocacy and influencing? What do policy makers need from practitioners?
Promote sustained contact with the laboratory of peace, test and trial elements of the policy to undertake reality check, since context is dynamic	What resources are needed for sustained engagement? How are the reality checks undertaken and by whom? What capacity is there for adaptation in response to feedback? Who decides?
Monitor the process: keep policy alive, a living document not a book on the shelf	Who monitors the process and how? What mechanisms exist to enable this (e.g. internal peace committees, external international monitors)? Do new mechanisms need to be introduced (e.g. cross border NGO monitoring under CEWARN)? How will this be resourced in people, time and money?

SECTION 3
WHAT CAN PEACE PRACTITIONERS DO?

There is a need for a vision, of how things should/could be, as well as practical steps towards the vision. Those practical steps are part of the process. This section presents four case examples from the Linking Practice to Policy Programme supported by Responding to Conflict and implemented by the Coalition for Peace in Africa. It also includes some reflections based on events that occurred after that programme was completed and ends with a framework to help peace practitioners develop and monitor peace policy initiatives.

'You must be the change you want to see in the world.'

- attrib. Mohandas Gandhi

What difference can we make?

This is different, it's very refreshing. It's practice led policy development.

This quotation from the Head of the Ethiopian delegation to Kenya encapsulates a process which took many years to develop. It had begun with the formation of the first local peace committee in Wajir in Northern Kenya. The model was seen to be effective in monitoring conflicts and preventing violence and was replicated elsewhere in the country. Those involved in the original initiative became recognised peace players both within Kenya and internationally. Dekha was invited on to the committee which began drafting the national peace policy, and in this way the practical experience from the community shaped the development of the national policy framework.

Practice can lead to policy formulation and that policy in turn needs practical support from those working on the ground.

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Another example can be seen in work on small arms. The existence of weapons is a cause of concern in many African communities; their experience of the devastating impact of small arms has provided material to back INGOs campaigning for policy change. In a 2008 paper entitled *From Moratorium to a Convention on Small Arms*[29] Mohamed Coulibaly describes how civil society and government officials became central agents of change in transforming the Economic Community of the West African States (ECOWAS) moratorium into a regional arms convention. The ECOWAS Convention is an attempt by a regional body, in this instance in West Africa, to adopt a binding agreement on arms transfers. The paper outlines the dynamic role of civil society, government agents, and a British INGO, in contributing to this change in policies and practices in West Africa.

When do policy makers need practitioners?

The examples given above demonstrate the value of synergy between policy makers and practitioners. It may be useful to identify specific instances where there may be influencing opportunities with policy makers because they need practitioners to enable them to act effectively in challenging situations.

There may be a ***policy vacuum*** as in the Kenyan case quoted. It became evident that the peace practice at local level needed to be backed up by a mechanism at national level. Policy makers may also see practitioners as significant actors in their ***political constituencies*** or seek their support when they themselves want to ***bring change***, for instance in the process of democratization. Practitioners can provide the evidence that organizations may require, in order to extend their mandate. For example, INGOs with a mandate for poverty alleviation, and seeing

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[29] Coulibaly, Mohamed: (2008) From Moratorium to a Convention on Small Arms: a change in policies and practices for the 15 member countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Oxfam International www.oxfam.org.uk/resources.

the impacts of violent conflict on creating and maintaining poverty, can draw on the material evidence provided by peace practitioners to argue that including work on early warning and early response to conflict should be integral to their development goals.

Times of crisis can open a door of opportunity and influence. In January 2008, following the election violence in Kenya, an initiative entitled *Concerned Citizens for Peace* was established. The initiative operated at two levels, working to create a conducive peaceful environment and encouraging dialogue on pertinent issues during the crisis. The original core members were an interesting mix of high level officials and peace practitioners with grassroots experience. They included: Ambassador Bethuel Kiplagat - a highly regarded Kenyan peace mediator and former special envoy for Somalia, General Daniel Opande (Rtd) – a renowned Kenyan Peacekeeper in Liberia, General Lazaro Sumbeiywo (Rtd) who served as Kenya's Special Envoy to the IGAD-led Sudanese peace process (1997-98) and then as mediator (2001-05,) George Wachira- a policy adviser with the Nairobi Peace Initiative (NPI) and Dekha Ibrahim Abdi.

When do practitioners need policy makers?

There are limits to the effectiveness of peace practice which does not have a policy dimension. Practical work may need *legal backing*. An early activity in the LPP programme was to hold a workshop for lawyers in Nairobi to introduce issues around conflict and peacebuilding.

Practitioners need to link up with policy makers when problems arise out of *clashes in policies and programmes*. Elsewhere the example has been given of the government policy of disarmament in Karamoja in Uganda which failed to take account of the need for livelihoods strategies for unemployed youth.

When conflict issues are complex and have dimensions which *extend beyond the local setting* there is a need for policy instruments with a regional scope to assist practitioners. An example of this has been the challenge of cross border conflicts and the need for a mechanism to recognise the issue and offer a facility for monitoring and response. The ECOWAS case described above is one example. Another is the Conflict Early Warning Early Response mechanism developed in East Africa by IGAD.

Case Studies and Examples

Linking Practice to Policy Programme 1998-2006

The Linking Practice to Policy (LPP) programme, a joint initiative of Responding to Conflict (RTC) and the Coalition for Peace in Africa (COPA), began in 1998 with the overall aim 'to develop and publicise methods of conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and of influencing the policies of the organisations and governments in critical areas of Africa (original proposal document 1997).'

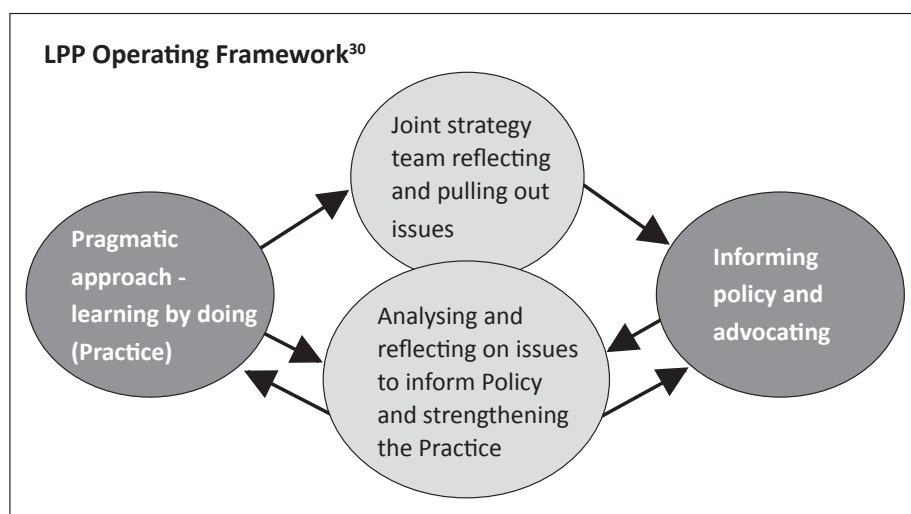Between 1998 and 2006 there were three programme phases:

Phase 1: Video documentation of peacebuilding initiatives in which COPA members had been directly involved in four African countries: Kenya, Somaliland, South Africa and Uganda. A fifth video interviewed and recorded the responses of policy makers in the focus countries. These videos can be seen at www.respond.org.

Phase 2: A 'learning year', in which the communities of the videos were revisited, workshops were held in which they reflected on their own situation, learned from others, created links and together constructed an agenda for the third phase.

Connections were made with policy makers at different levels.

Phase 3: Under the umbrella title of *Human Safety and Security* work in this phase built on the experience of the original communities and developed the connections which had been made in the second phase, undertaking extensive policy work at national and international level.

The diagram below shows the operating framework of the programme. Key elements were the process of joint reflection on actions taken and the identification of opportunities for advocacy and influencing work with policy makers.

LPP Operating Framework[30]

Joint strategy team reflecting and pulling out issues

Pragmatic approach - learning by doing (Practice)

Analysing and reflecting on issues to inform Policy and strengthening the Practice

Informing policy and advocating

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[30] RTC Linking Practice to Policy strategy Documents 2003.

What did LPP do?

I think it's very important to stress that ultimately peace is and starts between and amongst communities and people, and without a focus on the grassroots, on the way that people can get together and to reconcile their differences, there can never be any enduring peace. Peace cannot be imposed.

– UN Representative Randolph Kent interviewed in Practice to Policy

The key message of the LPP programme is that peacebuilding must involve all who are affected by violent conflicts. Official actors such as governments and the United Nations have a vital role to play, but unless they take account of the experience and wisdom of those facing the impacts of the violence on the ground their endeavours will have limited success. The people on the ground, in their turn, need not only to develop their own conflict analysis skills, drawing on and adapting traditional methods and including non-traditional actors, but also to seek ways of engaging with policy makers and advocating for change.

The four peacebuilding initiatives documented in the videos addressed different situations. The example from Kenya shows the development of a strong model for monitoring conflict and preventing violence. The Ugandan case demonstrates how, even in the midst of ongoing violence, it is possible to take positive and healing actions. The programme in South Africa describes how the national framework of reconciliation was translated into action at community level. The example from Somalia offers insights into a large scale process of dialogue with multiple actors, which culminated in the establishment of a stable, self-declared, state in the north of the country.

The key features of the four peacebuilding initiatives are summarised below, together with some thoughts about the continuing challenges for the future. They are followed by a fifth case study on the response

to election violence in Kenya in 2007, where organizations and networks which had been involved in conflict transformation processes in Kenya over the previous ten years mobilized to address the crisis.

The Wajir Story

The Context

Wajir District is in the arid north east of Kenya, where the majority of the population are nomadic pastoralists of ethnic Somali background. This group has experienced discrimination and long-term neglect by government. The region borders on Somalia and Ethiopia, and this border position together with a combination of factors such as the harsh climatic conditions, economic decline and ethnic clashes make the region potentially volatile and vulnerable to conflict. Competition over scarce natural resources can lead to violent conflict. Elections are another trigger as politicians compete to win votes.

In the early 1990s severe drought led to conflict between clans over water and livestock. In 1992 elections were held which changed the political balance in the district. In the same year the fall of the Somali central government resulted in an influx of refugees into Kenya and weapons and armed mercenaries entered Wajir District. There was animal stock theft, highway robbery, looting of homesteads, destruction of businesses and the rape of women and children. 1500 lives were lost in the conflict and by late 1993 almost no part of Wajir District was safe.

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Local markets reflected the overall tensions, and an initiative was started by concerned women from different clans to monitor the markets and address the tensions before they erupted into violence. The women's initiative succeeded in stopping violence in the market. They went on to address those directly involved in the fighting: the elders and chiefs of the three major clans. This resulted in the founding of the Wajir Peace and Development Committee which, with the encouragement of the District Officer, became part of the District Development Committee. In this way peace activists, community leaders and government policymakers had a forum in which to address issues of concern to all parties.

In the years since this initial success, the Peace and Development Committee model has been replicated in other districts. Now the initiative is supported by the Office of the President and the National Peace Policy Framework has been developed. Mechanisms to deal with cross-border conflict have also been designed.

Ongoing monitoring remains important. The root causes of the conflicts which arise still need to be addressed and many of these will require response at a regional level.

Key Features

A number of key features can be drawn from this case study:

- The process was enlarged to encompass all the Wajir communities including local government.
- Key individuals played a leading role. This included a number of women who started the initiative, and a local government official who supported the peace processes which they had set in motion.
- Community structures (the peace committees) were created to provide an ongoing mechanism for monitoring and addressing conflicts.

- Young men, traditionally not included in community dialogue and peace processes were involved, in the same way as the women who were also normally excluded.

Further Developments

Action and Reflection
- The video documentation of this initiative was followed up by a series of opportunities for reflection and learning. A workshop to review progress after the production of the video was attended not only by those from the original community but also by others who had been engaged in the other peace processes documented as part of the LPP programme.
- There was cross cultural exchange and the opportunity to learn about new models.

Education and Young people
- Young people in the education system were involved in peace clubs in schools; peace diaries (in English, Swahili and Somali) were introduced to monitor conflict in schools and document how these were handled.
- Links were made at the policy level through a review of the English language national curriculum. Attention was drawn to messages embedded in the texts which could lead to negative gender and ethnic stereotyping.

Safety and Security
- Further workshops addressed issues of human safety and security. These involved senior members of the Kenyan police force and also brought in experience from South Africa.
- The area of engagement extended to work on cross border conflict and lobbying for effective policy instruments to address this.

Intervention and Advocacy

- The effectiveness of this work had become known at national level; the Kenya government invited Dekha and her colleagues to join a mediation team to go and engage with a violent situation which had arisen in another area. They continued to be directly involved in mediation and other interventions, thus feeding in experience from the grassroots into reflection and advocacy.

Future Challenges

- It is likely that conflicts will continue to arise and need to be addressed. In one of her reports for LPP Dekha said that '*the work of peace is long term, from generation to generation*'. Peacebuilding needs commitment, perseverance and a long term view.
- External events will continue to have an impact. These include drought, diminishing resources, elections and other political flashpoints.

Policy Issues

- There is a need for clear government policy in regard to this region of the country.
- More work is required on a regional policy for cross-border issues.

Only through Dialogue: the Somali Way to Peace

The Context

The regime of President Siyaad Barre was characterised by civil war and oppressive dictatorial rule. When it came to an end the country was devastated. Most of the infrastructure had been destroyed, communication systems were down and public buildings ransacked. Anti-tank and antipersonnel mines were littered around or buried underground. This large arsenal of heavy weapons and small arms made acts of looting and killing more deadly; there was political, economic and social breakdown.

A UN peace initiative, UNISOM, failed to establish a sustainable peace and had to withdraw from the country. The lesson from this failure was that stability can only come from the people, and they are the ones who have to decide.

The Northwest declared itself the Republic of Somaliland and, over the next four years, underwent a series of inter-clan battles for control of resources and power. To end these struggles and achieve sustainable and lasting peace, the people of Somaliland went back to the traditional peace process which had been banned under the Barre regime. This process is founded on the inclusion of all the stakeholders in both the debate on peace issues and the agreement. Peace had to be established first between the major clans in the north which divided into those who had supported the Barre regime, and those

who had fought against it. Once this was achieved, more conferences were held to manage inter-clan fighting.

This traditional approach to peacebuilding requires consensus by all parties involved, in order to achieve durable agreements. The traditional process was extended to include women and young men, who were not normally party to the decision-making processes.

For external actors there is a valuable role in supporting and strengthening local communities, local NGOs and Community Based Organisations (CBOs), who can reach those at the grassroots and those who tend to be marginalised. Resources from outside played a key part in enabling all those involved in the discussions to be accommodated, so that they could remain for the very long discussions necessary to reach agreement.

Somaliland needs to consolidate and strengthen at all levels the peace they have created, so that old grievances and hostilities are laid to rest and a genuinely stable future achieved. As in the other case studies described, the conflict has a regional dimension, and it is at this regional level that durable solutions will need to be found.

Key Features

- Traditional mechanisms were revived but also extended to include non-traditional actors such as women and young men. Inclusion, openness and participation were important features of the process to build a peace agreement in the north of the country, Somaliland.
- Dialogue and engagement with many different stakeholders was key to the success of getting 'buy-in' to the agreement. This took a major investment of time. Resources were also needed to accommodate the many participants over the period of the dialogue process.

- Institutions and procedures were developed which met the needs of the context, blending traditional and western processes and principles.

Further developments

Action and reflection
- A learning workshop involving the original actors and others provided an opportunity for reflection on the process.
- A meeting was held to consider within a regional context the issues which had arisen.

Advocacy
- There was work with women parliamentarians, and support was provided for the election process. This drew on the South African experience and materials were provided for the electoral commission.
- An interview with the UN representative underlined the need for a home grown solution, as he stressed the importance of people themselves participating in the decision making that would affect their lives.

The Regional dimension
- Relationships were built with activists in Puntland, Somalia, Djibouti and Eritrea.

Young people and education
- The peace education materials which had been developed as part of the Wajir work were made available in Somali for use in schools.

Challenges

- The key actors in the initial process went on to other work, so the continuity was lost. This has affected the peace education work too.
- There is a need for a broad consideration of the country as a whole, including linkages with the neighbouring Puntland.

Policy Issues

- In a fractured state it is difficult to establish a locus for policy making.
- Policy decisions made internationally i.e. the suspension of Somali trading mechanisms, has an impact on local economy.
- There is a need to explore regional and international policy approaches.

Gulu: The Struggle for Peace

The Context

Gulu District in northern Uganda is an area that has suffered from protracted armed conflict since 1986. The conflict, between the government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has been characterised by human rights abuses on both sides. Initially it was only Acholiland that was badly affected, but from June 2002 the LRA operation expanded to other districts. The protracted conflict in northern Uganda is complex because it is also linked to other conflicts in neighbouring countries such as South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda, as well as to international interests in oil, minerals and the arms trade.

Local communities, locally-based NGOs, parliamentarians, government officials, INGOs have all been engaged in different peacebuilding initiatives within and across the districts and national borders. The focus of the Gulu video documentary is the reintegration of former LRA soldiers, and particularly of the children who had been abducted by the rebel forces and compelled to fight. Integrating the children back into society is very difficult, as most have committed serious crimes and would normally therefore have to face trial for murder in a court of law. But there is almost no family in the region that has not had a family member killed or been involved in killing themselves. The

legal system may create more wounds than it heals. Following lobbying by representatives of the Acholi, a blanket amnesty for returning LRA fighters was agreed by government, and an alternative process for addressing past crimes has been used, drawing on Acholi traditional practices.

The video features the Acholi ritual of reconciliation (Mato Oput). This traditional cleansing process requires the admission of guilt, being able to say sorry and to seek forgiveness. This apology is confirmed by payment of compensation, and eventual normalisation of relationships between the communities which have been affected and those of the offender.

This video documentation was the first of its kind and has been used as a tool by elders, chiefs and members of the Acholi community to demonstrate to government, NGOs and those from other cultures the appropriateness of such a mechanism for the context.

'Though we are victims our voices have been heard at all levels through our drama, songs, music and dance, documented on videos and aired on local radio. This has encouraged us to overcome our fears. Our work as peace agents has made us gain recognition locally and internationally. We truly feel empowered.'

- Quoted in LPP Mid-term Review 2004

Key Features

- This peacebuilding initiative to support the victims of violence demonstrates that even in the midst of ongoing violence it is possible to do positive work.
- Women, children and traditional religious leaders were involved.
- The traditional cleansing ritual of 'mato oput' was drawn on to rebuild fractured relationships. The additional video footage of this ceremony has been used widely in the community.

Further Developments

Action and Reflection

- A learning workshop with others to reflect on the initiative and consider the way forward led to broader work on security.
- The opportunity to watch the Somaliland video and have discussions with the Somali elders from Wajir enabled the elders from Northern Uganda to review the amnesty process and identify what did and did not work.
- There has been improved implementation of the amnesty law at the local level, led by both traditional institutions and by women.
- Peace initiatives have resulted in the defection of many rebel commanders as well as abducted children.
- Workshops with members of the security sector led to a broader definition of human security including the need for safe conditions for secure livelihoods.
- People from different ethnic groups in Northern Uganda were invited to all LPP activities undertaken in the country, and this has helped to foster a feeling of unity in diversity, and the ability to accommodate the views of others thus turning sensitive issues into opportunities for conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

Advocacy

- The elders managed to break the stalemate between the two sides. Confidence was built between government and the former rebel movement and formal talks began.
- The chiefs lobbied successfully for the government to provide financial support to facilitate the return of former rebels.

Negative Aspects

- Some members involved in the peace process started double dealing for their own gains.

- Some rebels started making unrealistic demands and threatened to go back to war.
- Many people did not approve of the government providing support to enable the former rebels to resettle. They interpreted this as rewarding those who had committed atrocities against civilians.

Lessons Learned

- Making financial offers at the beginning of peace negotiations can be subject to different interpretations.
- Peace processes can be undermined by personal interests.

Challenges

- Although it has been possible to take action, the ongoing violence remains one of the biggest challenges.
- Manipulation by war profiteers and military confrontation mean that many people continue to live in sub-human conditions in the camps for the internally displaced.

Policy Issues

- An interview with a Ugandan MP highlighted the need for material resources to back up policy initiatives such as the amnesty. International policy makers need to be involved.
- Government policy on the conflict and the role of the International Criminal Court have been of concern to some peace actors.
- A regional approach is needed.

Pulling Together: Community Policing in a New South Africa

The Context

During the years of apartheid in South Africa, the majority of South Africans – Blacks, Coloureds and Indians – were excluded from government, denied rights, and forced to live separately from each other and from the minority white community. The ruling National Party used the police and army to control these separate communities. The police force included some Blacks, Coloured and Indians but mainly in lower ranks, and organised into groups with little or no training. These groups were often the ones who faced the anti-apartheid activists in confrontations with the community.

When the African National Congress (ANC) finally came to power in 1994, the new Government of National Unity faced the huge task of building a new South Africa. Problems that had to be dealt with immediately included bridging the deep divisions between different groups of South Africans, divisions that had been fostered under the apartheid system. The police force was seen as the enemy by most ordinary people, and there was an urgent need to try and establish a new relationship between the police and the community.

In an attempt to foster accountability by all towards reducing crime, the new government implemented a law that meant that every police station in the country had to create a Community Policing Forum (CPF). Community policing introduced a new system of values and a new culture into the South African police service (SAPS), based on the values

of human rights and democracy, the foundation of the new South Africa as reflected in the Constitution.

This new concept of policing received a mixed reaction from both the community and the police. For the community activists participating in the CPF, sitting in the same room and working with police officers who had been feared and hated was not easy. At the start there was a lack of trust and a lot of suspicion. The police, for their part, were also uncomfortable with the CPFs, which they viewed as political watchdogs. A further problem in the early days was that CPF members ran the risk of being targeted and attacked by criminals, who resented the attempts to crack down on crime. Some CPF members lost their lives in this process.

This video focuses on the CPF in Daveyton community and shows how confidence and trust were built. Levels of crime in Daveyton were controlled. However, there have been practical difficulties. Participation in the CPFs has been on a voluntary basis, and this has been a serious constraint for people who cannot readily give up time which would otherwise be spent earning a living. The Government undertook a community policing review to inform policy that will shape the future of community policing.

Key Features

The case study highlights a community policing forum as an example of how the national framework for reconciliation was being translated into practice at the local level. Key features included:

- Engaging both community representatives and the police, actors with a historical relationship of suspicion and mistrust.
- The creation of a mechanism, through the forum, to build confidence and deal with police and community issues.

Further developments

Action and Reflection

- Further reflection on the process in a learning workshop with others led to a broader discussion of definitions of community safety and human security.
- Participants from the law enforcement institutions acquired confidence, skills and increased understanding of the concepts and issues in the field of conflict transformation. This has led to improved performance in the positions they hold in their institutions.
- Work with young people was initiated through a local organisation, PeaceJam.
- The introduction of sector policing mobilised communities. Activities include the identification of hot spot areas, a programme of regular school visits, and an Adopt a Cop scheme.
- The Daveyton police station has become more community friendly. A trauma centre was set up where rape and other sensitive cases can be investigated in privacy.
- New courses were introduced for the police. These include stress relief, trauma counselling and the introduction of a chaplain in the service so that police have access to spiritual guidance.

Advocacy

- A comparative study of community policing and community safety forums was published.
- Community outreach programmes were started to increase understanding about the role of the police.

Challenges

- The legacy of the apartheid past continues to affect present relationships and possibilities.

- Funding constraints limit opportunities. Advocacy is needed with international agencies, which withdrew support after the apartheid era ended. These agencies need to acknowledge the long term nature of reconciliation processes and accept that continuing material support will be required.

Policy Issues

- Making the linkages between the community experience and national policy remains challenging.
- There is a need for regional approaches to policy issues in neighbouring states such as Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Swaziland.

Other impacts of the LPP Programme

The programme began as a record of peacebuilding initiatives in four African countries, but became increasingly complex and multi-layered as linkages were developed between those focal communities and beyond, both within Africa and internationally.

At a regional level LPP actors contributed to the work of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), broadening the debate and offering proposals for dealing with cross-border violence in the Horn of Africa. At an IGAD meeting in Sudan Dekha highlighted the need for recognition of the role of women in peacebuilding.

At a continent-wide level the LPP programme contributed to discussions at the African Union and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) programme.[31]

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[31] The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is a programme of the African Union (AU) adopted in Lusaka, Zambia in 2001. NEPAD's objective is to enhance Africa's growth, development and participation in the global economy. (www.nepad.org)

The relationships which had been built between the LPP members who were part of the Coalition for Peace in Africa (COPA) network helped to promote COPA's visibility. LPP experience fed into COPA's courses on conflict transformation and LPP members and contacts such traditional leaders participated in these courses.

At an international level LPP actors contributed to the Peace and Development Platform which was established at the World Social Forum in Johannesburg. Also, throughout the LPP programme Dekha tutored on the RTC's annual *Strengthening Policy and Practice course*, which draws policy makers from around the world.

After the Election Violence: The Case of Kenya

The LPP programme ended formally in 2006. In 2007 violence erupted in Kenya following elections and some of the LPP actors were engaged in the responses. The experience of the peacebuilding organisations and networks which had been involved in conflict transformation processes over the previous 10 years fed into the processes to rebuild relationships after the election violence.

A range of civil society organisations (CSOs) emerged and gained impetus to engage in peace work and address conflict in response to the violence of the ethnic clashes in the Rift Valley and Northern Kenya in 1992-3. Three main types of peacebuilding CSOs emerged:

i) *Networks*
   Peacenet is a network of 107 member organisations. The function of the network is to co-ordinate and build the capacity of peace actors, in order to create a shared understanding in approaches, and a collective voice.

ii) Faith Based Initiatives

Faith organisations engaged in peacebuilding and conflict resolution initiatives include the National Christian Council of Kenya (NCCK) and the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims (SUPKEM).

iii) District Peace Committees (DPCS)

These bring together stakeholders who have an interest in working on peace and security issues in a given district and combine representation from civil society and government at the local level. These committees emerged from clashes in the north of the country, and later gained government recognition and support. In 2008 there were 16 operational District Peace Committees linked to the National Steering Committee. Their roles included facilitating resolution of intra-district conflicts, responding to conflicts over the use of natural resources, weapon collection, promoting peaceful elections and addressing broader peacebuilding issues.

These civil society efforts were gradually able to link with national level efforts. In 2001 the National Steering Committee (NSC) on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management was established within the office of the President. The Committee worked closely with the Arid Lands Resource Management Project, the National Operations Centre and the Disaster Emergency and Relief Co-ordination Unit. Its secretariat serviced the Kenya National Focal Point on Small Arms and Light Weapons (KNFP) and the Conflict Early Warning and Response Unit (CEWERU). According to Alex Nyago, formerly of Saferworld (2007), Kenya's peace policy is a product of experience gained from pilot schemes, where active peacebuilding work was undertaken through the partnership of citizens and government. These practical processes over the last ten years have informed the formulation of the Kenya Peace policy today.

The political crisis in 2008, following the disputed election of December 2007, led to the activation of the existing structure and initiatives. *Peacenet* and faith based initiatives such as the *Inter Religious Forum,*

the Kenya Human Rights Commission, the Women's Coalition for Peace, the Election Violence Response Network, the Media Council, and Kenya Private Sector Alliance, and National Steering Committee for Peacebuilding all intervened in the post-election crisis. New initiatives came up linked to the existing structures and building on wider networks. They brought on board other stakeholders and established new structures following the post-election violence.

As of January 2008, examples included the formation of the Nairobi Peace Forum comprising the NSC Secretariat, Nairobi Province Security Committee and key line ministries of Education, Youth, Health and Information. Other sectors included Concerned Citizens for Peace, Jua-Kali (informal sector) Association, Residents Associations, Kenya Private Sector Alliance, Maendeleo Ya Wanawake (the leading women's organisation in Kenya) and non-governmental organizations such as Safer World and Peacenet. All these networks and many more contributed in holding society together by undertaking many initiatives. However, Dekha noted in 2008 that "For this process to have greater impact there is a need for legislative support to institutionalize the process of learning, so that if Kenya is faced again with the situation of 2008, we can be better prepared to intervene in our own context."

In the aftermath of the post-election violence there were innovations and quick policy shifts. It was recognised that the post-election violence had had an impact in every aspect and sector of society in Kenya. So workplace and learning institutions took on a new role, becoming spaces for healing. Companies, and bilateral organisations responded to immediate trauma issues by creating structures within institutions for dealing with the aftermath of the violence and reconstructing relationships that were fractured. Some companies took their efforts further, by making sure that staff policy in terms of ethnic mix was checked. Together with encouragement of use of the national language this helped to prevent individuals from being intimidated.

'This is just the beginning of the long journey of helping society to recover from the scars of the violence. In the Rift Valley province, where violence was the most intense, the Dumisha amani programme by the government of Kenya engaged the pastoralist community in an integrated framework of dialogue, development and disarmament, led by a joint task force of the security and development people working hand-in hand and giving the peace dividend to communities affected by violence.'

- Dekha Ibrahim Abdi, 2008

The creative arts were brought into play. Artists, teachers and students generated peace songs and plays to help people make sense of what had taken place in the country. The Ministry of Education dedicated the national drama festival to the theme of peaceful coexistence. Civil society organisations worked with communities to create support groups and hold trauma awareness workshops. These workshops explored trauma healing from spiritual and traditional perspectives, where trauma is not an individual but a collective pain that requires a communal approach.

Framework for assessing peace policy work

One of the challenges for peace practitioners is finding or making the tools that can aid with analysis and group process. Many conflict analysis tools have been developed and disseminated; the exercise below is a useful tool to assess peace policy initiatives in particular. It can also be a monitoring tool, to measure change and its likely impacts. This tool can be used by different players in the process and may illustrate different perspectives on what has been achieved so far and what still needs to be put in place.

Exercise for assessing peace policy work

The circle below is divided into segments each of which represents a necessary feature of work on peace policy.

The questions below are designed to help practitioners assess the extent to which these necessary components are in place. There are 20 segments and 16 questions. Practitioners may wish to formulate their own context specific questions for the remaining four segments.

1. Do you have a clear participatory analysis of the context/issues?
2. Does the analysis include the history, the current dynamics and thinking about what might happen in the future?
3. Is there a shared understanding of the analysis?
4. Are there strategies that deal with including the different perceptions?
5. Is your organisation aware of the possible direct and indirect political implications of the work?
6. Are there already agreed strategies to deal with emerging issues?
7. What is the knowledge of the group in relation to the systems and structures you want to influence?
8. What are the strategies for dealing with blockages?
9. Has the group consulted with appropriate experts to try and fill in the knowledge gaps?

CONTENT/PROGRAMME

10. Is the focus to change existing policy or creation of a new policy?
11. What is the link of the proposed policy to other existing policy (locally, nationally and globally)?

12. Does the proposed policy's content meet the needs of the different range of interest?
13. Does the proposed policy framework offer short and long term strategies in responding to the needs of the affected community?
14. Does the proposed policy process incorporate and make use of the local skills, knowledge and expertise in responding to the local needs?
15. Are the proposed aims and objectives consistent with the vision and values of the affected group?
16. Does the proposed policy offer hope and vision of a better future?
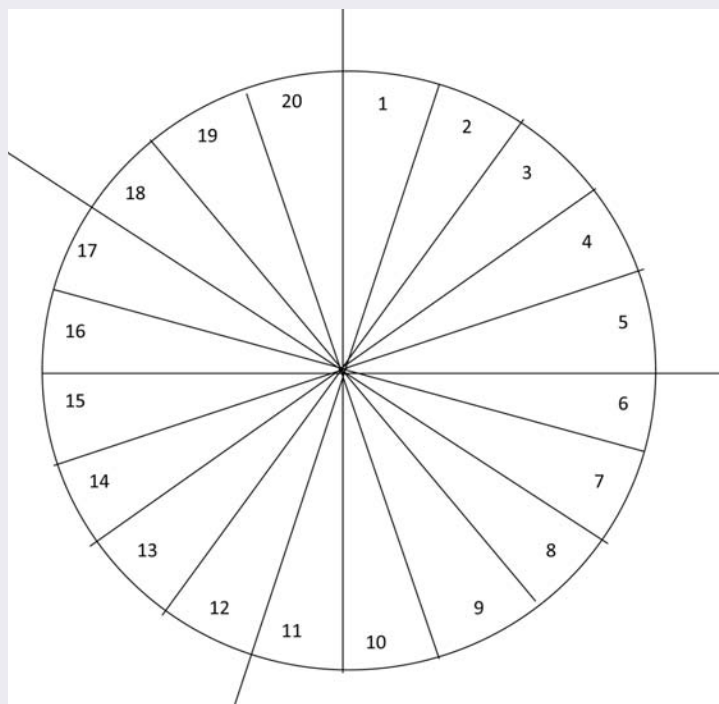
Conclusion

If you always do as you always did, you'll always get what you always got.

The cases presented in this section show the importance of innovation and creativity. The Linking Practice to Policy programme broke new ground in different ways. The Wajir Peace and Development Committee was a new initiative, responding to a severe crisis. It laid the foundations which proved invaluable in the later crisis which followed the election violence of 2007. The mechanisms which had been established provided models for action, and the LPP players were invited to bring their experience to the table to discuss the processes to be established to deal with the situation. The initiative in Gulu showed that even in 'hot' conflict it is possible to act to mitigate the disaster. New and creative ways of communicating peace messages were developed. In Somaliland the revitalising of traditional peacebuilding methods led to much needed stability. Exchange with South Africa provided valuable insights into the manner in which another new state, which was different in many ways, had approached elections and drafted a new constitution.

Trying to change conflict situations at top level can only work up to a point. The LPP programme showed clearly that peacebuilding, if it is to be successful, cannot afford to ignore people at grassroots level. Unless the hearts and minds of ordinary people are involved in creating peace around them, conflicts cannot be resolved in any sustainable way. It remains a challenge for all engaged in peacebuilding, whether in the international community, in regional government or in local communities to take on the voices coming from the grassroots and incorporate them into policy making. The gap between practitioners and policy makers needs to be closed if much needed capacities for peace are to be strengthened.

The LPP programme was successful in bringing this message, and in initiating and supporting policy processes. It was able to do this because the purposes of the programme were articulated at the start and remained consistent. The implementation depended on:

- Working with the points of energy, where people were already engaged but also moving beyond the initial stages and civil society groups. This required the characteristics of dynamism, flexibility and continuity.
- Inclusion – of the police, army, teachers, schoolchildren, lawyers, community leaders such as elders and traditional religious leaders – and emphasis on the importance of women and young people in the decision making processes.
- Connectivity – the connections between the different initiatives in the programme enhanced work at local level and also enabled networking to influence policy bodies.
- Being able to respond to influencing opportunities as they arose – e.g. the World Social Forum took place in Johannesburg, where there was a group of COPA/ACTION members.
- Practical experience on the ground which demonstrated the need for policies, or the problems with policies; this experience built the capacity to speak with authority to policy makers.

Through these processes, mechanisms were created to maintain momentum and provide points of connection with policy makers. Different situations will evoke different responses but reflection on previous experience will show what did or did not 'work'. It was possible to take these community level activities beyond their immediate environment, because practitioners had both the support of a clear framework and the flexibility to respond to opportunities as they arose. The starting point, in each case, was with individuals and groups who were prepared to step outside the mindsets which

maintained the violence, to take risks and venture into new, unknown, and potentially dangerous territory. They refused to accept that change was impossible.

Thinking the unthinkable is often part of a peace process.

LEARNING FROM DEKHA
TRIBUTES FROM COLLEAGUES AND FRIENDS

On September 10, 2011, a day of commemoration was organized by friends and activists in Nairobi Kenya, to honor Dekha and her work. The announcement for the event included these tributes, which reflect the deep respect and humanity that Dekha inspired in others:

A DAY WITH DEKHA

An egg is delicate and fragile, but given the right conditions, it gives life. You have to nurture the fragile potential for peace. Negotiations and peace agreements are just the beginning. Like a newly laid egg, we must nurture glimmers of peace and support and sustain them.

- Dekha Ibrahim Abdi, 2010

Abdi Billow

"In knowing her there were many aspects of her personality that moved me deeply: her passionate commitment and idealism which translated into a continuous activism for social justice, her constant transgression of religious and cultural traditions in critically constructive ways, her fundamental refusal to be taken as a second-class citizen because of being a woman, her openness in engaging even the thorniest aspects of the human rights struggle and her capacity to extend sisterhood to all and sundry."

Angi Yoder-Maina

"She mentored and coached hundreds of community activists, peacebuilding practitioners, interns and students. She humbly witnessed transformation and change and never took credit for her role in supporting that change. Instead she challenged and encouraged everyone to go a step further – seeking a future where conflict is transformative and not violent."

Babu Ayindo

"During the post-election violence, Dekha and others used their international contacts to raise funds to support the burial of young people who had died during the post-election violence...She insisted that in the midst of all the chaos, we, as peace and justice workers, needed to ensure that proper and dignified burials took place."

George Wachira

"If, as we must, we unveil monuments in her honour, it will only be to affirm and give company to the monuments she herself erected among us. Dekha's journeys of peace, including her last one, are not in vain... She is the gift that continues to give."

Scilla Elworthy

"She taught us humiliation is one of the main drivers of violence and that the best antidote to humiliation is respect."

Nuria Abdullahi Abdi

"You have left beautiful and strong children and thousands of friends who will carry your dreams and legacy forward."

LEARNING FROM DEKHA

Nuria Abdullahi Abdi

Dekha was a person of great passion and one who always believed in looking at the positive side despite the challenging and difficult situation. She had a conviction that in any crisis there is always an opportunity - look for what is positive whatever the situation instead of preoccupying yourself with the negative side. She would never take no for an answer but instead would look for any possibility around the issue at hand and push one to think extra hard on ways of succeeding or unlocking a deadlock.

When I told her that I was doing strategic peacebuilding as one of my courses at the University, I remember her laughing and saying, "That is what we need, we need people who can think strategically and do interventions based on strategic analysis." To be honest, Dekha was strategic and analytic in all her interventions. She had the passion to weigh options and ask for inputs before she made a final decision. She believed in dialoguing around issues and did lots of consultation before any action.

As peacebuilders this is good practice to borrow, a good lesson to learn. She always challenged colleagues to test their assumptions instead of taking anything for granted. She cherished the power of consultation and people's participation which is crucial to good peacebuilding practice. She was wary of self-seeking individuals who were there to hijack and distort community processes, but she also had convincing ways to deal with such type of people without offending them, through the power of dialogue.

Dekha had a knack for making positive impact on the lives of the common persons, while keeping good relationship with policy makers

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and those in authority. She did this without losing sight of the original goal and vision. To this end, one would describe her as an embodiment of tact and seriousness in work.

Dekha would often smile and say "You know what, you do not need enemies in the kind of work we do, we should have as many friends and allies as possible while pursuing your goal." I learnt how to deal with "spoilers" from Dekha. She would always say "just give them the space to express themselves and allow them to ventilate, but do not allow them to take control of the situation."

As a peacebuilding practitioner it is a great lesson: despite knowing the intention of the spoilers, one has to give them the space to feel recognized and their contribution appreciated, whilst ensuring that you do not lose control of the situation. She believed in the power of participation and inclusion, and the wisdom of collective responsibility in dealing with issues. She would give people opportunities to express themselves. However, she was very analytical in every aspect and refined everyone's concerns.

She was also an astute story teller who could always give a short story to reinforce whatever she was explaining. In most nomadic pastoralist societies, the oral tale is a way of connecting people. This made it simple for elders, women and the ordinary people to connect and relate well with Dekha. Storytelling and jokes help settle the mind, arouse interest in participants and reduce suspicion towards the resource person or the facilitator, especially if one is dealing with people who are suspicious or people whose prior perception of the facilitator is biased. I also learnt from Dekha that cracking jokes can help people be at ease and can liven the spirit, though this depends on the culture and context.

As a peace icon, Dekha had perfected the art of listening and trying to understand everyone's perspective, hence reducing the risk of some

party or some person feeling unheard. One could get impatient with Dekha's way of dealing with communities as she wanted to listen to everyone; she would say, "If you do not give them time to exhaust what they want to say, it might give them an excuse to spoil the process, or you might not hear the hidden side of the story that was never told before." Such is the beginning of the process of dialogue - you allow everyone to ventilate and air their grievances so that even the other party can understand them better, since the conflict or tension may have resulted from poor communication. This is a landmark lesson especially for communities or parties who are not active listeners. Dekha would always ask any speaker who had the floor, "Are you through or you have something to add?". This was meant to give the benefit of doubt to the person, and ensure that each speaker feels heard and appreciated for his or her contribution to the discussions. This means that peacebuilders need to be active and patient listeners.

Learning and sharing

Dekha has been a promoter of collaborative learning, and had no limitations in sharing her learning experiences; her example is something that can be borrowed by peacebuilding practitioners globally. Her method encourages sharing new insights and experiences to enhance learning, as well as information sharing and networking between the peacebuilding fraternity nationally, regionally and globally. Collaborative learning can be useful to communities living side by side or living apart but faced with similar challenges. Such communities will need to identify areas of collaboration in order to facilitate cross-fertilization and learning from best practices. Though no two situations can be the same, Dekha emphasized that lessons from others on how to enhance peaceful co-existence can always be put in perspective and adapted to new contexts.

Patience and selflessness

One of the important critical lessons I learnt from Dekha as a peacebuilder is the power of patience and of being down to earth. This can be best captured in the form of short stories as presented below:

In 2004, I went to Hajj with my husband and went to Medina and then to Mecca. I had developed a close relationship with a lady from Somalia whom I meet at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, and once we reached Medina city we shared the same apartment in the hotel (normally women stay together with women and men with men during Hajj). After we accomplished our rituals (sunnah) and religious obligations in Medina, we proceeded to Mecca. In Mecca, due to the high population of pilgrims, six to eight people share a room depending on the size. My friend and I shared a room with four other pilgrims, and there was an empty bed between our beds. One evening, a man came and asked me to remove the items I placed on the bed, and I was like, 'What! He wants to bring more people in the already congested room!' He placed a mattress hastily and said," You can come in." I could not believe my eyes and was left speechless when I saw Dekha come through the door and she was the person to sleep on the bed next to me!

That was a miracle; we were both in disbelief, hugged each other and thanked God. The first question I asked Dekha was, "How did you know that I was in this room?' and her simple straightforward answer was: "God directed me here." She further said, "When we alighted from the bus, people were very anxious, impatient and everyone was in a rush to get a room. People kept yelling and pushing each other, whenever a space was located and rushing and stepping on each other was the order of the day. I decided to remain calm and unemotional, and be the last person to be allocated a room, as I knew eventually I will find

somewhere to sleep—and when everyone got a space I was the only one without. I followed the man, and that is how I ended up next to you." What a patient personality! Dekha placed her fate in God and she received the reward from God!

From this story there is a lot to learn as a peacebuilder, as a leader and even as a human being. Patience is a key ingredient to success in any given time and scenario. Humility and patience go hand in hand and are a gift from God that we all need as practitioners in the field of peacebuilding. The other lesson is to be positive always and give others a chance, yours will always come.

My second short story about what I learnt from Dekha is about the value of persistence and selflessness. In 1998, our friend Jan Jenner, The Director of the Practice and Training Institute of the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding of Eastern Mennonite University, USA, wrote to Dekha and told her to prepare herself as she was going to fundraise for her to attend a few courses at the Summer Peacebuilding Institute (SPI) in Harrisonburg, Virginia, USA. Dekha wrote back, thanked Jenner most profusely and asked her if possible to raise funds for two people as she wanted to come with one of the volunteers of Wajir Peace and Development Committee. After putting a spirited effort to raise the funds for two people, Jan was only able to raise funds for one person to attend the SPI. When Dekha received the news, she communicated to Jan Jenner, thanked her for her generosity and effort and said, "Since I have had previous exposure on basic peacebuilding courses, I will give this opportunity to my colleague who has never had such an experience before," and Jan gladly agreed.

Dekha called me and explained to me every bit of her plans, and I could not believe it. I asked her, "You want to give me your only opportunity to go and do a course in the USA, and you have never been there before?"

I tried to argue with her but she insisted and said, "I have made up my mind to give you the opportunity, so go get your passport and process your visa, period." There was no more arguing because once she made up her mind, there is no turning back; a persistent peacebuilder she was.

She travelled to Bute, at the furthest end of Wajir North, bordering Moyale district near Ethiopia to monitor the Nomadic School that she was engaged in through the Nomadic Primary Health Care Programme. She got a signal from the Bute police post asking her to return to Wajir immediately, and on arrival she got the information that she had got a scholarship to go and study in the US. To our surprise, the scholarship she got was for the same Summer Peace Institute that I was to join, and this is how we ended up in attending the Summer Peacebuilding Institute (SPI) together. In our discussions, I remember her saying, "You always need to build the capacities of others for they will come handy when you need them most." And true to her words, when she got a job at Responding To Conflict (RTC) in 1999, she handed over to me the coordination work of Wajir Peace and Development Committee, and the skills I learnt from Eastern Mennonite University (EMU), were very helpful in setting the stage in the peacebuilding field and the continuity of the peace work in Wajir.

I learnt from this act of selflessness that giving opportunities to others does not lessen your chances for bigger opportunities. The positive sacrifice one makes today will be the reward of tomorrow: the more you build the capacities of others, the more you strengthen the cohesiveness of the communities you work in and the recognition of the teams' positive work, and the more you prosper. Building capacities of others and sacrificing for the sake of others, enhances trust building, cohesiveness and team spirit in any institution. This promotes the credibility of both the team and the institution as an effective institution.

Mentoring and Graduation

Dekha believed in mentoring, coaching and nurturing upcoming talents and was able to pick out visionary talents from a group with ease. Mentoring was a natural act for Dekha and she could easily connect with the young talents whom she mentored. From a learning point of view, the mentoring process is an effective way of building talent from within and ensuring the continuity of the peace process. This was what she normally called graduation - seniors must graduate and hand over responsibilities to the upcoming generation. But if you do not mentor your upcoming talent, whom will you hand over to when you retire? Certainly you are planning the death of the institutions. Ownership can be promoted through mentoring and coaching up-coming young talents, eventually allowing them to take over the community responsibilities. This is what we learnt from Dekha, the passionate peacebuilder and this is what sustained the peace process in Wajir.

DEKHA IBRAHIM: A RURAL WOMAN'S MODEL FOR PEACE

Abjata Khalif

In 1997 Dekha was a founding member of the regional Coalition for Peace in Africa (COPA). As the East African regional co-ordinator, she was involved in the Linking Peace Practice to Policy (LPP) programme of the COPA, funded by Comic Relief of the UK and other British agencies. LPP seeks to support and link communities in volatile areas in conflict prevention and peacebuilding work.

She was also a board member of Co-existence International, an initiative committed to strengthening the field of policy makers, practitioners, researchers, advocates, organisations and networks promoting co-existence.

Dekha was also a founding member of a global peace practitioners' network ACTION for Conflict Transformation, and the Consortium of African and International Conflict Transformation Specialists.

International footprint

She was also a patron of the London-based non-governmental organisation Peace Direct where she worked towards inter-religious/ethnic co-operation. In this capacity, she co-facilitated a project that aimed at providing a platform for young Muslims from all UK backgrounds — after the London bombings — to explore issues and challenges around being a Muslim and British.

Dekha had no boundaries or clan or class and everybody was her sister or brother. She strove for a free society built on social justice and without violence.

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"Dekha meant a lot to women and society at large here in Wajir and northern Kenya and it was evident after her death, when the community sent thousands of condolences through a radio call-in programme that was broadcast by Star FM, when the news of her death was announced," said Abjata Khalif, the chair of the Kenya Pastoralists Journalists Network (Pajan).

Eulogising the peacemaker, Florence Mpaayei, executive director of Nairobi Peace Initiative Africa said, "One memorable observation that Dekha made at a meeting convened to reflect on the Kenya mediation process following the post-election violence was how, as Kenyans, we knew how to debate but not to dialogue."

Betty Kaaria Murungi, a founder and a board member of Urgent Action Fund Africa (UAF-Africa), remembers how Dekha was instrumental in the thinking behind UAF-Africa's early work on rapid response teams. "She was a mentor to me and the entire UAF team as we navigated the perilous conflict terrain across Africa. She taught us so much," she said.

Njoki Wamai of the Africa Leadership Centre/Conflict, Security and Development Group, King's College in London remembers how Dekha kept reminding the women of the need to be at the peace table.

"She insisted that dialogues should not only be limited to those spaces at the national level in full view of cameras but to all levels from the national to the local... and those dialogues should reinforce each other both ways and not from a top down approach as in the case in Kenya."

According to Wamai, this model got the attention of Graca Machel, who asked her to write a concept about this on the Need for Dialogue and not Debate in Reconciliation.

"In Dekha we have lost one of the most insightful thinkers and intellectuals on peace and reconciliation on the continent," she said.

Selline Korir, the team leader of Rural Women Peace Link, said Dekha meant so much for them. "At a time when we did not know where look to for support at the height of post-election violence of 2007/008, Dekha in collaboration with NPI-Africa gave the group its first Ksh 100,000 ($1,111) that enabled us to start mediating between the internally displaced women at the Eldoret show ground and those who had remained in their homes at Kesses and Burnt Forest region."

But as the country and the world mourns the death of Dekha, her wish was to start the first East Africa peace institute. Perhaps the best way to honour her is to build the Dekha Ibrahim Peace Institute.

PRESENCE

Simon Fisher & Jane Fisher

A letter arrived at Responding to Conflict (RTC) early in 1993, post-weary and battered after several weeks journey. I opened it to find several pages of airmail paper covered with neat ballpoint writing. "I am writing from Wajir town, far in the north of Kenya, to ask if I can come on one of your courses. We are struggling to make peace here and have done a lot of things. But people are still fighting. We need more skills. We read your advertisement the other night in the New Internationalist and decided I should try to come. But I have a six month baby son: Ibrahim. I can't leave him behind of course. I am afraid that will make it impossible for me to come."

I took the letter down the short corridor to my colleague Judith Large. "She knows it all already. Why does she need to come? We don't have anything to teach her, do we?".

The rest is history. Oxfam provided the money and Dekha and Ibrahim came in 1993 to Birmingham to attend the second, 11 week Working with Conflict course. The unwitting star was Ibrahim, who attended most sessions and was the subject of keen competition amongst the 25 or so participants, all of whom wanted to hold him. Dekha herself was a close second in popularity. She was already self-assured and articulate and lapped up both content and process as if born to it.

A year later she came back as a Working with Conflict course tutor, and soon after she left she sent me a package from Wajir. Inside I found a spherical tin, full of what looked to me like coffee beans. Not totally sure, I wrote to thank her for the coffee, thinking that if I had got it wrong she would tell me. A long silence ensued. A cautious attempt to make coffee with the contents ended in failure, though I could not

be sure the results were not what passed for a delicacy in Wajir. Only at a later meeting with Dekha in Nairobi did she tell me, on being asked, that the gift was in fact dried camel meat. She had allowed me to discover the reality rather than point it out. As she said to me later if she had, she might have prevented me from discovering how to make camel soup.

Subsequently she became the first RTC International Fellow, and when that ended after a year she became Lead Trainer for RTC for a further two years, responsible for organising all the courses. This all culminated in the writing of the Working with Conflict book, published in 2000. Dekha and I taught each other so many things over those years. We were almost like brother and sister. She excelled in producing diagrams that were so complex few if any of us could understand them, but they produced very stimulating discussion in the course groups. (One got into the WWC book as she was completely sure of the meaning – though I have always struggled to understand her explanation). We explored process and content, systems and structures, third party interventions, power and powerlessness, freely inventing and re-inventing as we developed new aspects of the WWC curriculum. I learned so much about working across cultures, my own linear, "logical" way of thinking being profoundly challenged by her flowing, spiralled, story-telling style – especially when it came to reporting to donors.

She suffered agonies when violence flared up again in the Wajir area, and she felt she should return. But typically she overcame the first impulse - to dash home - as she realized that she was uniquely placed outside the country to lobby members of the UK parliament and other influential figures to put pressure on the Kenya government. She then developed important contacts in these corridors, and did her best to influence them to help lobby the Kenya government to play a more proactive, constructive role in ending the violence. Later she was to develop further her influence at government level in Kenya, and

became a key member of the National Peacebuilding Commission of Kenya, which is based in the office of the president.

In so doing she and her colleagues gave a powerful example of the need to take a multilevel approach to conflict, and to include possibly hostile stakeholders wherever possible. In this case this category included the government. Back in Wajir this same principle had led to the inclusion of military and political figures as well as the elders in the development of the Wajir Peace and Development Committee, and an open invitation to participate in its meetings to members of the government spy agency sent to inform on them. She avoided judging people, whatever their role and their past misdemeanours, and treated each person as a potential supporter of peace work. Not infrequently this led to such people being profoundly changed. This instinctive openness stood her in good stead when called on to play a pivotal role in the national conflict that arose over elections in Kenya in 2008.

We witnessed this remarkable inclusivity towards people at first hand on a visit to Wajir in 2004, and were deeply affected by it, as also by her inclusive vision. She always saw peacebuilding as an integral part of helping to improve people's lives overall – never as a separate skill to be practiced in isolation. The Pastoral Schools Programme which she founded (mobile schools and teachers moving across the district to assist the children of pastoralist families as they moved from area to area in search of pasture for their camels) was one of many testaments to that. That visit provided the only occasion when I have facilitated a workshop on my back. A slipped disc the day before (in Dekha's mother's house) removed the option of standing and the elders were not to be disappointed, as this had been long in preparation with Dekha. So I operated from the floor with the elders grouped around me. None seemed the least surprised, and I wondered why I had not thought of this mode of facilitation before, especially as it does introduce a different and potentially humorous dynamic.

We agreed wholeheartedly on the need for humour, and shared the same sense of comedy. I remember to this day the shocked expressions on the faces of course members, when they came into the classroom one day near the end of a course to find the normal friendly circle turned into stark rows, with each chair now having a desk in front of it. Dekha had changed her manner completely and was now in her element as a headmistress, giving strict instructions and invigilating with a stern, smile-free face. Today was the day of the exam. Anyone who did not pass would have to stay on and redo the course. The content of the exam? A sequence of conflict analysis diagrams: ABC triangle, conflict cycle and so on, with all annotation removed. The task was to annotate them again. Some, still cautious, did as they were told, correctly. Others took it as a chance to be creative. I remember the concentric circles of the Onion being redesignated convincingly as both a fried egg and a hatted boy scout, seen from above. I think Dekha "failed" that candidate, to general hilarity.

Humour was of course fun, by definition. But its use was also serious, in recognition that nearly everyone who came on these courses was carrying a great deal of hurt. The necessary seriousness of the course had to be tempered with enjoyment, laughter and relaxation if participants were to go home healed as well as wiser and more skilled, a principle that is still often forgotten in much conflict-related work.

In those days as later she impressed me hugely with her spiritual commitment: her prayers five times a day, her regular waking at 5 am for the first of these, the pilgrimages she made to Mecca. Yet she was never for a moment self-righteous, and was always clear that it was the life that resulted that was crucial, not the observance itself. But there were aspects of this that made me wonder. How she was, at least apparently, so unquestioning about her religious beliefs as set out in the Koran. How different – for better or worse - I was, with a Quaker way of life, in which doubt and questioning were core elements. What

a difference the Enlightenment has made to the both of us. How, if at all, would Dekha's approach to Islam be different if Islam had been subjected to the same intellectual critique that Christianity has since the Enlightenment? I remember her saying after the Asian Tsunami in 2004 that Islam taught that the casualties were being punished for their wrongdoing. It seemed such a long way from the compassionate response I experienced when we worked together. I never discovered how she managed to hold these beliefs concurrently. But she did, without apparent difficulty.

I admired so much in her:

- The priority she put on spending time with the children, even if it meant missing apparently important work-related events was a beacon - and a challenge - for many of us who can spend many months away from our families according to the apparent dictates of the work.
- Her keenness to allow others to shine: she took delight in releasing the skills and talents of others and stepping back from the limelight. We talked much about, and fully agreed, on the need to avoid egotism and the cancer of self-aggrandisement. I was with her when she discovered that an agency which had recently begun to support her work had, without her permission, put her photograph on a leaflet, and on the internet, building her up into a star figure, implying that she was the key leader responsible for the whole peace movement in the north of Kenya. She wept openly. How could such an agency not know the nature of collective leadership and peace work? How could they not be aware of the multiple dangers of implying that a specific individual was "the" leader, however neatly that might fit into Western thinking?
- Her generosity, whether to individuals she met along the way or to the Peace University at Wajir, to whom she gave the substantial proceeds of her Right Livelihood Award.

- Her brave frankness: once at RTC our son Jonah was helping out for a few weeks in the summer vacation, when some of the staff were on holiday. Dekha was visiting, and called me in agitation for a private discussion. She was deeply disturbed by what she saw as the beginning of nepotism and even the start of a dynasty at RTC. How could I do this when it went so contrary to our values? It took a lot of courage for her to initiate this discussion with her "teacher" as she continued to describe me, and, when the situation was clarified, the relief was enormous, for both of us. Many would have buried such doubts as too dangerous to allow to surface.

Of course life would sometimes get her down. Sometimes we would find her in a state of emotional exhaustion. So many people came to her for help. Relatively few, it seems, outside her family and her religion, were able to help her regenerate her own resources. But she knew at such moments that she had to stop and withdraw for a while to regain her strength. As her life progressed, of necessity she got better at saying no to requests for help when she felt she did not have the space to do so adequately.

Two years ago she responded to my request to come to Zimbabwe for a week to encourage those working for change. Her trademark style was evident in every setting. She would listen closely to what was being said, and not said, and then offer her thoughts, often sprinkled with examples of other peacebuilding initiatives around the world. She would encourage everyone, and insist that no struggle was too hard. The Wajir Story, a video that RTC and the Wajir community had made together about a women-initiated peace movement, was shown, and she typically filled in some of the aspects which were not described, including the despair that she and her colleagues would sometimes feel. To everyone she was honest, to all she offered hope, and the challenge to do more, even to the members of the central intelligence organization who came for a day's training while she was with us. Just

before she left, we picnicked at Bushman's Point on Lake Chivero near Harare and drew up the "Bushman's Point Declaration", a commitment to the development of the Wajir Peace University. Her enthusiasm was irresistibly infectious.

Writing this has been a deep experience for me. I have been rediscovering a soul mate and articulating her impact on me, and aspects of mine on her, in a way I have never had to do before. Most of all, what remains for me now is her sheer presence. When she sat in a room she held people's attention as much by who she was as by what she said. Her life spoke of service and commitment and she touched so many that way without knowing it. When, after her final accident, the Kenyan authorities ordered the traffic to be stopped in Nairobi so her battered body could travel unimpeded from the airport to the hospital, it was an apt acknowledgement of the power of the presence of this dynamic, unassuming sister of ours who, while never losing her essential self, became known and listened to across the world, from grassroots to governments.

SEE THE PAIN IN EACH SITUATION

Scilla Elworthy

From the first time I met Dekha at Woodbrooke, she started to shape my thinking about conflict transformation. From the research we were then doing for the book of stories of locally-led peacebuilding, I knew that local people knew best what was needed in their area. And Dekha proved to be the most eloquent and experienced example of this that I had ever met.

From her origins in rural Kenya, she became a global peacemaker, helping transform violent conflict in many of the world's most divided countries. Her comprehensive methodology combined grassroots activism, a soft but uncompromising leadership, and a spiritual motivation drawing on the teachings of Islam.

She was born in 1964 in Wajir, near the border with Somalia, and received a good education thanks to her father's support. At her secondary school pupils were divided along religious and ethnic lines, but Dekha and her friends created a space between these opposing camps by sticking together. This childhood experience informed her philosophy of inter-religious co-operation as essential to achieving durable peace.

In Wajir a conflict between clans over water and livestock claimed 1500 lives in the early 1990s. Dekha, then head teacher of a school in Wajir, started a grassroots peace initiative with women from other clans. Despite opposition from traditional leaders, they began to organise mediation between the warring factions. Dekha's method was first to listen carefully, without interrupting, to all involved in the conflict. She knew that humiliation is one of the main drivers of violence, and that the best antidote to humiliation is respect. The process was a

personal interaction with each individual or group, in order to "see the pain in each situation". Then, when everyone felt their point of view was understood, she would work together with all parties to restore relations between victim and offender. Although Dekha may not have known it at the time, this is exactly the method that Mandela used in South Africa and later to prevent the Rwandan conflict spreading to Burundi. She explains this process in a short YouTube video http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pwe6mlExHZg.

When an agreement was finally in place, the women didn't rest. Knowing that 50% of peace agreements fail unless followed up, they set up Wajir Peace and Development to bring together all stakeholders - clans, government security officers, parliamentarians, civil servants, Muslim and Christian religious leaders - to ensure that the agreement was implemented. In the following years, Dekha and others in Wajir worked tirelessly to expand work amongst young people, ex-combatants and the nomadic population, as well as initiating peace festivals and school programmes, to try and ensure a lasting peace.

What was striking about her approach was, firstly, her presence. When she walked into a room, a sense of calm and dignity entered with her. That meant that before a word was spoken, everyone felt a little safer. Tensions began to subside. This kind of presence cannot be invented or conjured up; it's the result of years of self-examination, reflection, listening, and learning.

Second, her conviction that peace was possible. I remember her addressing a group of hard-headed journalists in London after the post-election violence in Kenya in early 2008. She held them spell-bound with her account of how the strategy for violence reduction was put into action, minute by minute.

Third, young people immediately warmed to her. From 2002 Dekha was patron of the London-based NGO *Peace Direct*. In this capacity, after the London bombings, she co-facilitated a project to provide a platform for young Muslims to explore the challenges around being a Muslim and being British.

Fourth, her modesty and generosity. She never took credit, even for the many awards she received. Back home she worked as an advisor to the Kenyan government on mediation, and in 1999 was awarded the *Distinguished Medal for Service*. In 2005 she was named *Kenyan Peace Builder of the Year*. She was nominated as one among 1000 women for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2005. In 2007 she received the Right Livelihood Award, often referred to as the 'Alternative Nobel Prize'. She gave her substantial prize money to help start a Peace University in Wajir, which is still an ongoing and inspiring project.

Dekha's spiritual identity as a Muslim formed a strong foundation for her peace work. She explored the Qur'an's teaching on understanding the soul in terms of bringing about durable peace. Indeed, she encouraged individuals and communities in conflict to examine themselves using verses from the Qur'an.

When violence erupted all over Kenya after disputed elections in 2007, she was called to the Serena Hotel In Nairobi, where two retired generals, an ambassador and two other civil society leaders, already gathered, pointed to an empty chair and said 'Dekha, please take the chair. We have to design a way to stop the killing.'

One of the methods they used was to ask the 60,000 members of a women's organisation who had cell phones, to look out of their windows and report what they saw. The information started pouring in. They began to plot not only the 'hot spots' of the violence but also the 'cold spots', since it was important to know where people were

running to, so they could be protected. They then began to develop strategies for each spot, with the help of trusted local leaders. In less than 3 weeks, with the help of community, youth, and church leaders, sports personalities, police and the media, these strategies brought the violence under control. When Kofi Annan arrived to mediate between Kibaki and Odinga, it was possible to secure a peace agreement based on a mix of 'official' plus 'local' methodologies–exactly the way advocated by Dekha and her colleagues.

What do I do differently as a result of knowing this great woman? I utterly believe in the power of one local person to transform a violent situation. I know that humiliation is the driver of most incidents of violence, and that respect is the best antidote to humiliation, and I try to apply that. Dekha said "feast with your enemies", so I try at least to prepare and offer food to those with whom I find myself in disagreement.

She saw only too clearly the fragility of peace, saying that peace needs to be nurtured as carefully as an egg. Dekha found deep fulfilment in enabling others to develop their full potential as leaders for peace and justice, never seeking the limelight for herself.

PEACEBUILDER, COLLEAGUE, FRIEND

Janice Moomaw Jenner

Where do I begin to write about how Dekha has shaped my peacebuilding and my life? So many good memories, so many learnings, so many things yet unlearned.

I think others will write of her brilliant mind, her analytical skills, her ability to see connections, her incredible teaching and facilitation skills. I've learned much from her in all of these areas, and I will miss these connections in the future.

And yet during these last weeks as I've thought of Dekha, what I've thought about are her personal qualities and the very deep lessons I've learned from her in those ways. I want to share several stories that illustrate this.

First of all, as I think of Dekha, I think of her seeming inability to stereotype people; her ability to see beyond the title, the uniform, the ethnicity to the heart and soul of the person in front of her. Dekha taught me to build relationships wherever I am and with whoever crosses my path.

In 1995, on one of my first trips to visit the newly-forming Wajir Peace and Development Committee, my husband and I were invited to lunch at Dekha's house. At a time when relationships between Somali Kenyans and government officials were at a level of deep mistrust and suspicion, we walked into her sitting room and found, among many other people, the District Commissioner, the head of the Army, and other down-country Kenyan government officials. I was amazed, and realized as the meal went on that this wasn't just a new form of protocol; for Dekha it was all about building relationships. As we sat

and chatted and ate chicken and rice, and drank sweet tea, I learned as much about myself and my own prejudices and stereotypes as I did about the peacebuilding work.

On a very different level, the last time that Dekha was at EMU, just a few weeks before her death, we went shopping for gifts for her children and friends. We wandered into a shoe store, and staggered out three hours later with thirteen pairs of shoes for her daughters and others. During that time in the shoe store, I again watched in amazement as she made friends with one of the sale persons–a young, tattooed, spike-haired woman who, by the end of that encounter, had an entirely new understanding of Islam and women who choose to wear veils. By sharing her humanity, humour, and joy in buying those shoes, she connected with the saleswoman in ways that went far beyond that of customer.

Second, not only have I learned from Dekha the importance of not stereotyping myself, but of helping others break the prejudices that they have. Dekha constantly carried stories from one place to another, and by doing so, helped others to see people very different from themselves as people. She often told me that people back home have huge misperceptions about Americans, and she saw it as her role to help them see that Americans really do care for their families and their communities.

Dekha's first visit to EMU in 1998 was during the time that money was being collected to build a mosque in Harrisonburg. During that time a local Presbyterian Church had set aside their fellowship room on Fridays for the local Muslim community to have a place for prayers. Dekha was very pleased to be able to donate money for the mosque, and through the years talked often about how important it was for her to share the story of a church that shared their space with a Muslim congregation.

At one point several years ago I mentioned to her that each twelve-year old in our local church congregation chooses an adult within the congregation to be their mentor during their teenage years, so that they have someone besides their parents to relate to during those often difficult years. Dekha wanted to know all the details about this, and said that this was something that she needed to share with people back at home, because it would show them that Americans really do care about their children and their communities.

I never stopped learning from Dekha's enormous curiosity about everything in the world around her. She taught me to see the little things, to follow enthusiastically where interests lead, and to expand my breadth of interests and knowledge.

Among other interests, Dekha published a children's book about Wajir, a book about the trees of Northeast Kenya, and a book on traditional Somali embroidery patterns.

On her last visit to EMU, Dekha learned about flip cameras, and how videos can be made quite easily with them. An EMU professor tutored her for about three hours, and the next day she was ecstatic about a 28-second video that she had made and posted on the web. She bought several flip cameras during that trip to take back to Kenya. A few days after her death, I watched a young peacebuilder in Wajir use one of those cameras to interview a Somali elder.

And Dekha taught me the importance of living by faith and values. Her rock-solid grounding in Islam became more and more evident during the years that I knew her, and her work, her life, her being flowed out of that. We had many conversations through the years about Islam, Christianity and faith; knowing this deeply religious Muslim women has moved me to a deeper commitment to my own Christian faith.

When Dekha and I met in 1993, I was working for a small Christian NGO, Mennonite Central Committee. MCC was at that time providing small amounts of funding for peacebuilding work in Kenya, and Dekha and I spoke about MCC providing some funds for the emerging Wajir Peace Group. Dekha questioned me for an entire afternoon about MCC's values, and ways of working, its stance toward Muslims, and its commitment to peace. She wanted to know the same thing about my own values. It was only after this and other conversations and then taking her understandings back to others in Wajir, that she and the group agreed to accept funds from MCC.

I think that because she had contributed to the building fund for the mosque in Harrisonburg, she somehow felt that it was her own. Through the years, each time she visited EMU and prayed at the mosque, she'd report with enthusiasm the increase in the number of people praying, the diversity of the group, and her happiness that this Muslim group seemed to be thriving here in the United States.

And finally, Dekha taught me about enjoying life. Her smile, her enthusiasm at each new experience, her joking and chuckle, even in the midst of difficult times, will stay with me forever. She loved life, she loved her children, her family, her friends, and her colleagues, and she welcomed everyone and every experience into her wide, opening acceptance.

Dekha told me a story about once when she was in Nairobi she was in a shop purchasing butter, and two men behind her started speaking in English about "why this Somali woman was taking so long just making a simple purchase – that's how all those Somalis are." Dekha turned around and explained to them that actually she was contemplating why butter imported from New Zealand was cheaper than local butter, and trying to decide whether she should place more importance on her

family's budget by buying the butter from New Zealand, or whether she should support the national economy by buying the more expensive local butter. She laughed with pleasure as she remembered the way the men looked at her, and kept chuckling while she said that she hoped she had changed the way they viewed "those rural women."

Having tea with Dekha was always an experience of laughter and learning. Whether in Nairobi, Europe, or the US, a time of sharing food and tea meant sharing stories of children and family, stories of peacebuilding work, of high points and disappointments, of tears and laughter.

The last time I was with Dekha, just a few weeks before her death, she spoke over and over again about her family, about how happy she was with her children and about how much her husband, her mother, her brother and others meant to her. Her smile as she talked about them engaged not just her entire face, but her whole being. Her life was very full, and she was content.

I will miss you, Dekha: my colleague, my friend, my sister. And the lessons that you have taught me will remain with me, in my work and in my life.

IMPROVISATION AND FAITH

Sue Williams

It's so very difficult to think about Dekha in the past tense - partly because she was always so present, so engaged, and also because her work was constantly changing. Dekha was constantly learning, testing, trying out something new. It was one of the joys of working with her, and one of the reasons she has been so important in and to our field.

Dekha first came to Responding to Conflict in 1993. Already, she was doing really interesting work with the Wajir Peace and Development Committee, and our role was to help her frame it, name it, systematize it, and share it. When she described their work, it was clear that she and her colleagues had already incorporated many of the goals and approaches others took years of study to understand. They were building alliances across all the lines of division. They were motivating actors at all levels to become involved in peacebuilding. When there was an incident, they were making sure that it was investigated by a trusted authority, they were expressing condolences to victims and engaging the sympathies of those related to perpetrators. They were looking at root causes, patterns and dynamics, systems and structures. They were linking ongoing work at various levels, and engaging in advocacy.

Dekha would approve of the fact that this description is in the third-person plural: not she, but they. She always described her work as "we". Often, people did this, and often it was a kind of device, but really there was primarily one person leading, and others helping out occasionally. On my first visit to Wajir, I half expected to find this, but, on the contrary, I found a large number of people and organizations working on different aspects of the situation, and a small but serious

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group working as Dekha was working, with her, alongside her, with leadership more a collective than an individual role. It was very satisfying, to see that Dekha was not working alone. It seemed much more likely that the work would be sustainable, that there would be checks on theories and strategies, and that many stake-holders and voices from the society were included.

Dekha and I worked together a number of times, in a variety of countries and contexts. It was always inspiring and also great fun. As a colleague in consultancies, as a co-teacher in educational settings, Dekha would ask the question that made you pause and catch your breath. Sometimes, it would take the rest of us a while to catch up. Sometimes, other colleagues who didn't know her well would look puzzled, and then dismiss the question as irrelevant, proceeding on the path they had already identified. I learned early not to do this. As part of a team with the American Friends Service Committee, analysing the situation in Somalia, she and I went off together on a tangent that became the basis for the analysis and the strategy we ended up with. Dekha asked about the resources Somalia had to solve its own problems. She began talking about Somali traditions, the importance of everyone having access to public resources, the history of political and clan groupings violating this custom and breaking the trust in the society, and the effect of outsiders ignoring this question. I learned something about myself, as well. Almost as fast as Dekha came up with new questions and insight, I seemed to come up with ways to express them or test them, and together we could make them into actions and strategies. We always worked together in this complementary, intuitive, satisfying way. I cannot express how much I will miss it, miss her.

As we developed tools in our work with Responding to Conflict, and later as we worked on the Working with Conflict book, all of us drew inspiration from Dekha. As varied a group as we were, six co-authors

from five countries, Dekha brought more diversity, fewer shared assumptions, and a greater willingness to test assumptions. Perhaps most important, she never overlooked present possibilities to continue a task. That may sound like an equivocal comment: Do we really want a team-mate who is not task-driven? Yes, we do, as Dekha showed us. I can see her still, focusing on a student asking a question, not impatient as I would have been, drawing out the student's confusion, and showing how the question was relevant to the task at hand. I can see her working at community level, or addressing policy-makers, still taking seriously their comments, still showing them how things linked together. I can see her driving us all crazy, struck with a new idea just when we felt the need to nail down an old one. She caught on to ideas so quickly, and saw connections so well, that she could bring the rest of us with her. And, on a good day, it was a kind of leap-frog, each person contributing the next step, until we ended up somewhere deep in the problem and its possible solutions.

So far, this description of Dekha's work is, as it were, from the inside out. The other level is just as important, however.

One of Dekha's gifts was perseverance. She would continue to work on a problem, continue to think about a situation, continue to be in touch with people, long after others would have given up in despair and moved on to something soluble. Nothing illustrates this better than her long, steady commitment to Somalia. Yes, she was a very rooted person, keen to improve the situation and use the resources of Wajir. She saw Wajir's situation in regional, supra-national terms as well, always thinking what could be done in Ethiopia, Somalia, Somaliland, Djibouti. Over time, she worked across all of Kenya, then all of Africa, and eventually the world. Each new situation remained with her. She would have ideas about Cambodia, the Philippines, or Northern Ireland whether she was formally working there or not.

And she was ever optimistic. That was a second great gift to those of us who lived in conflict-ridden situations. Dekha always believed that these situations could improve, that we could do something to help, that there were resources to bring to bear on apparently-insoluble problems and conflicts.

These days, I try not to wonder what we will do without Dekha. Instead, I am full of gratitude that she was with us for a time. Her work and her life have been important to many of us, and in many ways. Dekha had, and cultivated, two gifts that are crucial to work for peace: improvisation and faith. She lived them to the full.

YOU TAUGHT US HOW TO BE FULLY AWAKE

Susan Collin Marks

The breezes at dawn have secrets to tell you. Don't go back to sleep.
– Jalaluddin Rumi

Day by day, Dekha lived the peace that she sought in the world. Hers was a peace that came from the depth of the human spirit, a long, slow, deep, eternal peace from the inside-out that she brought with her presence, profoundly marking everyone and everything she touched. She knew in her "settled soul" that she was called to be the peace she wanted to see in the world.

She lived the life of a healer. When an Israeli-owned hotel in Kenya was bombed in 2002, she took a group of Muslim women with her to meet with the Jewish owners and facilitate dialogue with the local community. When ferocious violence erupted after the 2007 election, she was one of the original five Kenyans who formed *Concerned Citizens for Peace* and helped shepherd Kenya across the abyss that tore open her beloved country. She always brought healing, she mended the broken places.

Dekha walked lightly on this earth. She used the term "settled souls" to describe her vision for all of us, encouraging us to walk with her into our best selves. She knew what it meant because this is who she was, and will always be. She accompanies us and encourages us now and forever. Listen now, can you hear her call?

PEACE TO HOLD

Emma Leslie

You prayed five times a day your whole life.
You pilgrimed to your beloved Mecca more than most.
You observed Ramadan in its purest way to strengthen your soul.
You were ready for Paradise.
Paradise was ready for you.

But we were unprepared.
You had warned us many times.
It's not about us, it's about the work.
"Take your ego out of it",
Let the vision motivate you,
Generously give the credit away.
Feel proud when others are praised for something you know inside
was you.

And when you were gone.
Horrifically, violently swept away,
You were not taken from us,
It was your time to go,
But we were unprepared,
And could not and would not believe.

But as we pulled ourselves together,
Grappling with this cruel reality,
We began to comprehend the massive legacy you had left us.
It weighs heavily on your children,
Universities to build,
Somalis beyond number to feed,
Fragile peace to hold.

This should not be the burden of your children alone, if at all.
All of us who loved you, all inspired by you,
All who grieve your shining face,
And your gentle challenge to build peace everywhere,
Must honour your memory.
We must take up the mantle.
You did not leave us alone, you left us an eternal quest to end violence and realize peace in our time.

We commit to honour you, by carrying forward your mission,
A hundred fold, a thousand fold, to all the corners of the earth.
We will not allow your children to bear this mantle alone.
For it is surely heavy as you well knew.
With the wisdom you left us,
With the spirit of generosity you shared,
And energized by your ancient laughter ringing in our ears,
We pledge our lives to work for a just peace,
Just as you spent all your days.

Thank you Dekha for entrusting us with this most sacred of tasks.
We hardly feel worthy but we will not shy away from the challenge,
For to do so would be to dishonour your life's work.

FINAL WORD: A GENUINE PEACE BUILDER

Halima A O Shuria

They say "Necessity is the mother of all inventions". One of the things I learnt from Dekha was her ability to innovate, in order to make peace processes look possible and simple even in the most difficult situations. She would always make sure that everyone could take part through active engagement. Of course she did not do all this single handedly, but it was her leadership style that made these interventions possible in most occasions.

Among the several trainings I facilitated with Dekha Ibrahim the regional workshop we had in Wajir in 1998 stands out. The vital lesson I learnt from Dekha during that training was empathy towards others and trust building between rival groups. The Wajir Peace Committee had brought together several participants from Moyale, Isiolo, Mandera and Garissa

(Marsabit Districts were invited but could not attend due to logistical issues). This was the climax of the inter-clan and tribal conflict in the Northern Kenya region. Bringing participants from the conflicting groups was not easy, especially between the Boran and Somali participants.

The mistrust was so high that one Boran participant from Moyale had come with her own son as her bodyguard due to fear of insecurity. But then something happened which changed the whole atmosphere. The female participant who had brought her son received information that one of her parents was very sick. After consultation, Dekha provided two vehicles, one to carry the patient and one to carry security personnel. She asked the team to be in solidarity with the woman and her family and say special prayers for both strength and recovery for the sick. The patient was brought to Wajir district hospital, treated and returned home safely.

This was the turning point, and all the participants felt they were more connected than earlier perceived. One participant said, "We have already been told by elders that Somalis are our enemies: we have learnt today that this is the elders' perceptions and that Somalis are good natured people and not our enemies". The empathy and the kindness in Dekha helped build trust; her peacebuilding intervention had the power to connect and change people's perception through wise actions. I saw that this was genuine kindness, which is crucial in peacebuilding and healing communities.

Dekha connected easily with everyone, a talent necessary for every peacebuilder. Coming from a patriarchal society where peacebuilding and leadership is regarded as a male preserve, she was able to convince and connect with elders, fellow women (women can be their own worst enemies at times), religious leaders, youth and government officials. She connected well with all facets of society, and gained their respect. Dekha changed the perception about womens' role in peace

and leadership. For me this is something special, as womens' role in peace leadership has been widely accepted of late.

Her leadership role within the Concerned Citizens for Peace during the post-election violence in Kenya is a good example of her credentials within Kenya. People from all quarters of society easily accepted and supported her leadership in peacebuilding throughout the country and beyond. Her wide connections were evident when the news of her accident spread like wild fire.

She was a great team player, a characteristic important in the world of peacebuilding. She would always talk about the importance of cohesion despite differences in opinions; she promoted a collective approach to solving the problems through win-win processes and through consensus. She valued everyone's contribution within the team.

Despite knowing or sensing the magnitude of the problem, she would always downplay it to avert possible panic or hostile actions among the community, while at the same time looking for opportunities to engage and avenues to approach and address the problems. She was always positive that a solution would be found however hard it may be. "There must be a way out", she would say. I liked her confidence in dealing with crisis, a critical ingredient for peacebuilding.

Another lesson learnt from my many years of interaction with Dekha is the importance of messaging that connects with others. She would always say: "Your story must resonate with the peaople you are working with. And if your story does not resonate with others, then you have to reflect and re-assess your approach". Resonance with others will impact positively and will help connect easily with the people you are working with.

In conclusion, I remember a story that Dekha told me when she came back from a certain trip. On this trip she met a lady who could heal people by placing her hands near their body. Dekha used to have a knee problem; this lady did her trick, and then told Dekha to squat and stand, and she felt no pain. This surprised her, so Dekha asked the lady what else she could do. The lady asked her: "What do you do?". Dekha replied: "Peace work." The lady tied Dekha's eyes with a blindfold and stretched out her arms. She then put two empty boxes in her outstretched hands - one labelled peace and one labelled conflict. The box labelled conflict began to fall as if it was very heavy. The lady then changed the boxes to opposite hands and the same happened, the peace hand would be fine, but the conflict hand would be weighed down.

She then removed Dekha's blinds and people were laughing as the lady said that this lady – meaning Dekha – was a genuine peacebuilder. She does not just do peacebuilding because she gets paid or gets a name or whatever other reason, but because she genuinely wants, lives and breathes peace. I think that was the best description that could be applied to her and it is the lesson I take home.

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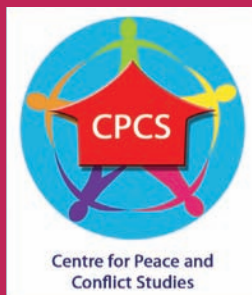
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