

Theory from Practice

**Action Research Results
ACTS Course Graduates 2011**

APPLIED
CONFLICT
TRANSFORMATION
STUDIES

Theory from Practice:
Action Research Results
ACTS Course Graduates 2011

Theory from Practice: *Action Research Results - ACTS Course Graduates 2011*

Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (CPCS)

Phnom Penh

2012

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Layout by Boonruang Song-ngam

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Preface

Since 2005 the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (CPCS) and Paññāsāstra University of Cambodia (PUC) have been working in partnership to make possible the Master's in Applied Transformation Studies (ACTS). This Master's course includes such elements as practical study, advanced conflict intervention skills, and theory building, analysis and strategy development. Yet while there are many criteria which separate this programme from any other around the globe, perhaps the most distinguished is the participants which it attracts. These individuals are not fledgling students who possess little understanding of the complexities of peace and conflict but instead join the programme equipped with at least two years' practical experience. Such diversity characterises each class not simply as a collective of students but a consortium of peace practitioners, a unique group who comes together to both learn and share. It is this exceptional occurrence that makes the ACTS course a truly unique educational platform for peace.

While we value the potpourri of insight which our students embody, the impetus for this publication is not simply a deep pride in these individuals. Rather it is based on the broader beliefs of CPCS, which disagree with the imposition of external concepts and models of peace on the many conflicts in Asia. Our work focuses instead on networking and supporting local initiatives for peace in conflict contexts, particularly through fostering a distinctly Asian approach to conflict transformation. Although we engage this objective through many branches of activity, the ACTS programme is somewhat of the flagship of the sentiment. Centrally it is hoped that by encouraging the students to link their experiences with academic theory they may draw out the gaps in the practice, surmise corresponding theory, and thus initiate a new era of innovation in peacebuilding in Asia. However we must also recognize that this ideal is a long-term goal and as such will take time to fully realize. In this light the following work of our students should be understood as a prominent chapter in the evolving story of the ACTS programme.

On these grounds we are pleased to present this collection of short papers from the ACTS graduates of 2011 for public review. Firstly, this publication marks the inauguration of an annual series showcasing our student's use of the Action Research (AR) methodology – a research technique central to the ACTS curriculum.

Introduction

Following the successful submission and defence of a final thesis, the ACTS graduates of 2011 have authored these short papers to summarize the central ideas, insights and arguments of their full works. In addition to the academic content the reader is also presented with accounts of the journeys of personal development that the participants have undertaken over the programme's two years, and which show that each individual has become more self-reflective and strategic in their planning and implementation of activities. As such the pages of this publication not only presents a window into some of the most complex issues of peace and conflict in the region, but also illustrates how the ACTS course has encouraged its students to link concepts and theories with their own practical experiences for the betterment of regional capacity and home-grown solutions to conflict.

Placing great value on embracing the nexus of theory and practice, the Action Research methodology has been introduced into the curriculum as the primary vehicle for students to carry out the following research projects, as well as others over the two year period of study. It is a technique which does not shy from blurring the lines between practitioner and academic, rather it uses several mutually reinforcing cycles of reflection to position the researcher as part of – not removed from – the topic-in-question. In essence this research design is perfectly adapted for studies by practicing professionals. Yet it is not without struggle that the methodology has been accepted as a valid model for academic research, and there are many sceptics who view Action Research as unsophisticated in its approach (for example because of the 'inevitable' researcher bias that comes from 'interested' parties carrying out the project). Our rebuttal is simple: how can you realistically expect to identify, consolidate, and share lessons-learned from peace practice in Asia, if not for empowering those involved on the ground to themselves define the issues? Common sense dictates that it is only through such an approach that the gap between the theory and practice may begin to be filled.

In the preface we have established the assumption that conflict in Asia is unique and necessitates a distinctly Asian approach to affect its transformation. In harmony with this concept CPCS believes the most promising method of initiating this process is to foster the development of innovative approaches to peace, by people who are from the region and who are extremely familiar with the various contexts. Accordingly, from the course's inception the ACTS faculty (and family) have hoped to facilitate the degree of independent thought needed to inspire the

creation of new knowledge by the students, particularly through the generation of creative and context-sensitive theory. This goal is not only logically founded on the belief that the students-cum-practitioners are in the most advantaged position to draw out the appropriate and applicable lessons, but also carries the hope that these lessons may – even in part – help catalyse a change in capacity, organizational structures, and analytical and strategic thinking of peace practice in the region. However recognizing this notion as a long-term impact requiring prolonged intervention (as opposed to a short-term outcome), it is important for us to establish the programme’s current level of performance.

As the creation and sharing of new knowledge and theory generation has been a constant aspiration of the programme its success is one of the most appropriate and easily accessible near-term indicators of academic achievement. For example, is it not rational to assume that once the performance has surpassed a satisfactory level there will naturally emerge a collection of academic work which warrants publication? This is the concept we are primarily concerned with today, as this collection of short papers is the evidence of ACTS’ performance success. In fact what will be proven by the pages of this publication is that while the journey to establish the Master’s in ACTS has indeed been arduous, the path which it has now embarked upon is one of consistent progress and a demonstrated year-by-year advancement in academic excellence. Although this is certainly a bold statement, it is not an unfounded claim; the World Education Congress recently conferred an Education Leadership Award to this unique programme.

In the following chapters an array of issues are tackled resulting in a colourful collection of insight and analyses. Chapter 1 situates the works through a detailed introduction to the ACTS course, and a discussion of the effectiveness of action learning to build the capacity of peace practitioners in the region. In Chapter 2 we begin to see the work of the students themselves as they engage and challenge key assumptions and perceptions of poverty in Vietnam and conflict in Afghanistan; ultimately these reports urge careful and rigorous analysis of the context of any intervention. Chapter 3 sees the theoretical discussion of two Designs for Peace. These articles provide innovative alternatives for responding to violence both in Bangladesh (by developing a peace curriculum for youth) and in Cambodia (through the architectural design of a museum for peace). In Chapter 4 we are presented with three articles which seek to share the larger lessons from the authors’ own experiences at the practical level. This is achieved through discussing donor cooperation in Banda Aceh, community feedback mechanisms in the GRP – MILF peace process, and civil-military cooperation in Maguindanao. Finally Chapter 5 takes on a more personal face with two particularly reflective accounts by the

students, who question how to improve their own role as practitioners in Sri Lanka and Thailand.

Notably the common themes which have blossomed throughout interlink each work and have ensured the reports fall together as a succinct entity, heavy with lessons-learned and ideas of best practice from the ground. However above all of its undertones one message is clearly heard through the following pages: As practitioners it is our moral obligation to regularly evaluate – and create awareness of – our role in the conflict system, and actively question (rather than passively accept) the assumptions and norms which ground our practice.

Chapter 1

The MA in Applied Conflict Transformation Studies (ACTS)

Action learning for peace?

Applied Conflict Transformation Studies as a capacity development approach

By Dr Willemijn Verkoren and Alexandra Moore

Applied Conflict Transformation Studies (ACTS) is a Master's programme for peacebuilding practitioners that is offered in parts of the world that are affected by conflict. It was initiated by Responding to Conflict (RTC), a UK-based non-governmental organisation (NGO), and developed and implemented with the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (CPCS) and Paññāsāstra University of Cambodia (PUC). As the programme was developed there were three main aims in mind. *The first was to develop the capacity of peacebuilding practitioners to engage in their work; the second was to support and promote effective and strategic peacebuilding work; and finally to develop theory and new knowledge about peacebuilding processes from the perspective of those who are engaged in the actual work.* To do this ACTS focuses on practice-based learning within an academic framework to offer a programme suited to the needs of practitioners. Action research (AR), which focuses both on people's work and their own role within it, is central to the course. The underlying idea is that by using action research methodology in their own work environments, and comparing their findings with existing thinking in the field of peacebuilding, the participants not only become more effective in their practice but also contribute to global theory development from a Southern, practitioner perspective. In this way the programme aims to bridge some of the divides in the peacebuilding field between universities in the field, and between North and South.

This article explores the lessons that can be learned from ACTS as it has been implemented between 2005 and today. In particular it asks whether ACTS provides a model for peacebuilding capacity development that may inspire other initiatives. It will look at the specific theories of change which underpin the programme and ask to what extent have these theories proven correct? In particular, has action research turned out to be an approach that can foster analytical and reflective practitioners and more effective and strategic peace practice? Have changes been

able to move from the individual practitioner to their organisations and colleagues? And has ACTS been able to strengthen the voice of practitioners in the generation of academic theory?

This article has been written by two people who have been involved in the ACTS programme in different roles and at different stages. Dr Willemijn Verkoren is assistant professor at Radboud University Nijmegen in the Netherlands and has accompanied the development of ACTS as a learning consultant since 2005. Alexandra Moore is the Programme Coordinator for RTC and has been involved in the development of ACTS since its initial stages. The article also draws heavily on the thinking and reflections of many colleagues, in particular Dr Vesna Matovic, the RTC Programme Manager for this work. Clearly then, we are not neutral observers and we have tried to be conscious of the possible bias that this may bring to this article.

This article begins by giving a short history of the ACTS course in section one: how did the programme come into being? In order to elaborate on the question why ACTS came into being, section two discusses the importance of learning for peace practitioners. Section three goes on to examine the theoretical background of ACTS: what theories and research findings have informed the approach taken? More specifically, section four outlines how these theories and ideas have translated into theories-of-change that have shaped the programme. In other words, what did we think ACTS would accomplish? Section five explains how these theories were translated into practice: what does the course look like and who are the participants? In section six, the theories of change are compared to the results we have seen so far. Have the theories proved correct, and has the programme met its aims? Finally, the concluding section discusses what all of this implies for capacity development initiatives more generally.

1. How did ACTS come into being?

Responding to Conflict (RTC) is a UK-based NGO that has been working on conflict transformation for over fifteen years. It has focused on the provision of training courses to peacebuilders from around the world as well as longer-term programmes of work with partners in various conflict-affected regions of the world. In Birmingham, UK, various courses have been offered, ranging from short week-long courses to the three-month Working with Conflict course. RTC's approach, whether in programmes or courses, is based on a participatory, experimental learning methodology that builds on the experiences and knowledge of those they work with.

By 2001 RTC had been working with peacebuilders for over eight years and the organisation felt it was time to take stock of how it was doing. During research trips in 2001 and 2002 RTC staff and associates visited various peacebuilding practitioners to find out how people had been able to use the training they had received from RTC in the past and to identify what challenges and needs remained for practitioners. One of the key needs that people voiced was for opportunities to access more in-depth skills and knowledge, and to think about the complex issues and challenges they were working with. Many were thinking about further study and some had already gone on to Bradford University in the UK or the Eastern Mennonite University in the US to do a Master's course. These courses had been valuable to them – but, they said, not to the communities they left behind, as their education had not explicitly been linked to the practical work they were returning to.

This led to the idea for a learning programme that “...develops and articulates the experience of people working for peace, human rights, democracy and justice, builds new theory from practice and tests it in the fire of reality” (RTC 2004). During the consultation phase of ACTS there was much debate about whether ACTS should be an academic programme. On the one hand this seemed like a natural option for an advanced learning programme, but at the same time it was recognised that the challenge would be to balance the needs of practitioners and their ways of working with the necessary demands of an academic course. It was finally decided that a Master's degree would provide the structure and rigour to allow people to undertake their research and refine their thinking. However, the difficulty of balancing practitioners' needs with academic requirements is an issue that has remained with the programme.

The course began in 2005 with its first participants from South and South-East Asia arriving in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

2. The importance of learning for peacebuilding NGOs

“Am I doing this thing right?” and, more fundamentally, “am I doing the right thing?” are questions most people ask themselves from time to time. And indeed they should as asking such questions leads to learning and improvement. In the complex and dynamic work of peacebuilding, they are particularly important, as the potential price of doing the wrong thing is high and renewed violence could ultimately be the result. However, finding answers to these questions is not easy. Doing so entails an open mind and a willingness to question previous decisions and ideas and learn from our mistakes – something which in a context affected by conflict is particularly

difficult because of the implications this may have. It also requires a willingness to think about how we as individuals affect a given situation, and the assumptions we bring about the work. More practically, it is hard to obtain the knowledge needed to answer the questions in a satisfactory way. This requires research, reflection and exchange, all of which are particularly difficult in a conflict-affected and resource-deprived context.

The characteristics of violent conflict have changed significantly since the end of the Cold war, as is reflected by the term 'New Wars' (Kaldor 2006). Increasingly wars take place within, not between countries. Often they are fought by groups that are confusingly difficult to define, hiding amongst civilians and exhibiting the characteristics of rebel forces, sectarian groups, terrorists, warlords, and criminals. Government forces, too, engage in plunder and smuggling, and integrate militias and private security providers into their ranks. Increasingly civilians have been targeted by the fighting groups on all sides. All this takes place in a context of globalisation and a weakening of national states' ability to provide for the security of their citizens. Deeper understanding about this new and changing context of conflict, and about the strategies that do and do not work is needed, if conflicts are to be successfully transformed. Those working in the midst of conflict, such as peacebuilding NGOs, struggle to understand it, to adapt their analysis as the context changes, and to articulate why their actions do, or do not, contribute to changes in the situation.

A recent study found that "NGOs best equipped to deal with security threats were those which [...] had a strong analysis of the context" (Goodhand 2006: 107). Such NGOs are able to make sense of the conflict in which they work and to understand how changes in their context affect the work that they do. In other words, they are able to learn continuously, and this helps them to continue to be relevant and to see opportunities for engagement when they arise. Similarly, another study of nine successful South Asian NGOs showed that "the success of these NGOs was in part attributable to their willingness to embrace new learning and invest in developing their capacity as 'learning NGOs'" (Hailey and James 2002:398).

However, learning is difficult in conflict settings for a number of reasons. NGO staff – often working in a context of urgency – by necessity have action-oriented working styles, and as a result can find it difficult to create the time and opportunity for reflection and learning. In conflict-torn societies, the content of knowledge itself is usually contested as many narratives will exist within any given situation. In addition the mistrust and suspicion that often

prevails between organisations working in these areas, as well as competition for resources, can hamper knowledge sharing. Structural inequalities also constrain the opportunities for learning and reflection that local Southern NGOs (SNGOs) have: the low research capacity of Southern knowledge institutions, a lack of recognition of indigenous knowledge, and the imposition of Northern policy priorities as part of the way the funding of NGOs is organised. All these issues contribute to a lack of opportunities for Southern peacebuilders to reflect systematically on the role and place of their activities in the wider spectrum of peacebuilding, to analyse the effect of their interventions and ask whether they are doing the right thing, to study the needs and priorities of beneficiaries and collect existing ideas and methodologies of peacebuilding, and to document and share lessons learned.

The learning strategies of organisations are a relatively new field of analysis, which originated in the business sector in the early 1990s, reflecting an increasing emphasis on the 'knowledge economy'. Some years later, the development sector began to take up the issue as well. However, this body of thinking remains largely confined to internal learning mechanisms and knowledge flows inside organisations in the global North. From a study of British development organisations, Ramalingham (2005: 26) concludes that these organisations'

"focus on internal knowledge work belies that fact that [they rely] on activities in the South as a key source of their most valued knowledge, and that eventually, all knowledge that is 'value generating' must by necessity be tied back to a level of [knowledge sharing] with those in the South. [...] Learning between agencies and Southern partners, and between agencies and beneficiaries, is a clear gap in the knowledge and learning strategies [of international development organisations]".

3. Theoretical background

A number of theoretical discussion and academic research findings have a bearing on the ACTS programme and its aims. In this section we will look at some of the discussions regarding the importance of learning for peacebuilding NGOs, different types of learning (in particular, tactical versus strategic learning, how peacebuilding NGOs in the field tend to learn, and whose knowledge is considered to be important. Together, these theoretical and empirical findings provide a background to the theories of change used by ACTS.

3.1 The road to improving effectiveness

One way to categorise the various activities of NGOs is according to the diagram below, often referred to as Key People, More People. The model was developed by Anderson and Olsen (2003) and based on the outcomes of a three-year project called Reflecting on Peace Practice that involved over two hundred peacebuilding NGOs.

Figure 1: Categorising NGOs’ activities in peacebuilding¹

	More People	Key People
Individual/ personal level	Peace education Training community mediators Strengthening grassroots	Lobby Training parliamentarians Dialogues between (religious) leaders
Socio-political level	Mass demonstrations Public campaigns	Negotiating peace zones Facilitating peace talks Early warning DDRR

Figure 1 looks at the ways in which most strategies for working towards “peace writ large²” can be understood. The horizontal axis represents a difference in strategies ranging from activities aimed at involving as many people as possible to activities aimed at a limited number of key people. “More people” strategies want peacebuilding activities to be as broad-based as possible and to have people from all interest and conflict groups take part in them. “More people” strategies are not simply about numbers of people. It can mean having more people who are aware of a particular issue perhaps through public campaigns or mass protests. It may also be more people who are skilled in a particular way of working (ie. skills training in mediation, peacebuilding). And in situations where it may be dangerous for people to participate in peace activities, it may mean a strategy which moves incrementally towards involving more and more individuals. “Key people” strategies by contrast aim at those people who are considered to be in positions in which they can make a difference, affecting the larger political or economic framework in which peacebuilding efforts take place. These may be people in government, powerful civil leaders,

¹ Adapted from Anderson and Olsen 2003: 48.

² or the bigger space beyond the immediate context of a project or programme (CDA 2004).

or representatives of international organisations. Lobbying is a “key people” strategy, as in negotiation to create peace zones or efforts to facilitate dialogue among leaders. (Anderson and Olsen 2003: 48-49)

The vertical axis shows two other dimensions of peacebuilding work. Activities aimed at the individual or personal level strive to start building peace by changing people’s attitudes and perceptions. Peace education is a good example of this. Socio-political level strategies aim at systemic, institutional change, at the level of society as a whole. Strategies to strengthen democracy and activities to further socio-economic development both fit within this category (Anderson and Olsen 2003: 48-49). If we start filling in the above-mentioned activities in the quadrants of the diagram, it might look as follows:

One of the report’s main findings was that work which stays within one of the squares is not enough to generate any significant momentum for change. Fitting their activities into such a model may help NGOs to understand better how they are placed strategically. It can stimulate reflection on the relationship between activities and final aims and encourage the development of more effective strategies. For example, if an NGO works mostly at the individual level, key people level, how does it expect this work to trickle down to the more people level – and who and what are needed to make that happen? Alternatively, when an organisation focuses its activities in several parts of the quadrant, do these different areas of work strengthen one another, and how? Further on in this section we will see that most local peacebuilding NGOs have not done such thinking explicitly, but voice a need for more reflection on their place, role, strategy, and results.

3.2 Types of learning

A large body of literature about learning (and organisational learning) has come into existence in recent decades, generating various ways to categorise learning processes. An often-made distinction in these publications is between first-, second- and third-order learning. First-order learning uses a pre-given set of knowledge, which is transferred from a book or teacher to a learner. By contrast, second-order learning is the creation of new knowledge by *learning in action*. It is a cyclical trial-and-error process of action and adaptation and involves asking questions, reflecting, and adjusting while acting. Third-order learning goes a step further in that it also includes questioning the validity of the tasks and problems posed. It does not take the structural framework in which the action takes place for granted but questions the ultimate aims and principles that underline the action. Where second-order learning leads

to adjustment at the tactical level in order to meet one's aims more effectively, third-order learning may lead to strategic changes, such as an adjustment of the aims themselves. Thus, second-order learning may also be referred to as *tactical learning*, while third-order learning is *strategic learning*.

Third-order learning adds another cycle to the learning cycle of action, reflection, adjustment, and renewed action; namely the cycle of self-reflection that involves the question of underlying values. It entails asking difficult questions at the individual level about my own role in the activity in which I am engaged. What implicit theories, assumptions and experiences do I bring to this action, and how do they shape my ideas and actions? Should my assumptions be modified?

Because third-order learning adds another cycle, it is often referred to as 'double-loop learning'. In double-loop learning, the values and assumptions underlying my actions are reflected upon and tested simultaneously with the reflection and testing of actions themselves. (Kolb 1984, Argyris 2004, Boonstra 2004, Cummings 2004).

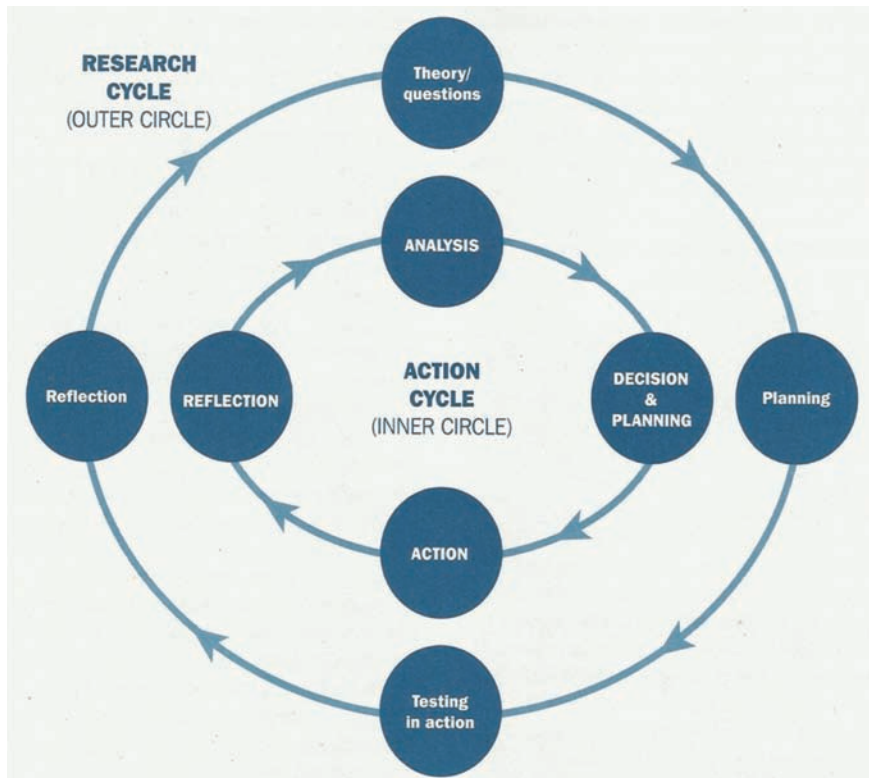
3.3 Action research

The concepts of action learning and action research (AR) build on the idea of third-order, strategic learning. Here, too, learning takes place by doing, reflection, and experimentation – while at the same time there is a focus on the underlying implicit theories and values of the learner. The action learning and action research cycle is depicted in Figure 2, which clearly shows the double loop.

An important difference between AR and 'traditional' research is that while "traditional academic research denies the relationships between the investigator and the empirical object", AR recognises that the presence and actions of a researcher have an impact on the reality they study, and vice versa. According to AR, "the ambiguous, dynamic and changing world cannot be understood from the detached position of the pure observer" (Boonstra 2004: 17). Thus, action researchers do not strive to be objective observers who are separate from what is being observed. On the contrary, they study a reality of which they are part and explicitly take into account their own role in shaping this reality. In response to their growing understanding of what they are studying through AR, they may introduce changes to this reality in order to examine the results to which those may lead. Therefore in the practitioner-focused AR used in the ACTS programme research, questions are formulated

at two levels: what do I want to know about my role in the action, and what do I want to know about the action in which I am involved? The usefulness of AR to practitioners in the peacebuilding field is considered further in section 4.2.

Figure 2: Action learning (ACTS 2005: 13)



The inner circle represents the action learning cycle, in which an activity is carried out. This starts from an analysis of the situation, followed by the planning and then the implementation of the action itself. Next, a reflection takes place: how did I do? Do the results confirm my original analysis of the situation – or should it be adapted? If I remain on this inner circle my learning might stay at the tactical level, depending on how serious I am about my reflection and analysis. However, if I also follow the outer circle, the research cycle will take my learning to a further strategic level. Including research questions, to be examined whilst undertaking the ongoing action, this requires me to be explicit about my understanding of the world (theories, values, assumptions) that underlies my analysis of the situation. In turn this lead to the formulation of a plan to test the research questions and my theories during the action. This testing consists mainly of being aware of the underlying theory during the action and being open to the possibility that it might prove to be inconsistent with the events that take place as a result of the action. In the reflection phase I do not consider only my action and its results, but also the way in which they relate to the underlying theories and assumptions that I have made explicit earlier on in the process. This leads me to adjust these theories and assumptions, and a new learning cycle may begin (ACTS 2005, Cummings 2004).

3.4 Local peace practitioners learn at a tactical level

The learning processes of local peace organisations in conflict-affected countries tend to take place at the micro-level and to focus on the short-term in which a given project is implemented. Changes may be made within the confines of this project, but more macro, strategic questions ('is this the right project in relations to our long-term aims?' 'How does this project relate to what others are doing?' 'Are we together in contributing to the macro-level, longer-term peace?') tend to be overlooked. (Anderson and Olsen 2003; Fisher and Zimina 2008; Verkoren 2008). The earlier-mentioned *Reflecting on Peace Practices* project concluded that, although much well-intended, good peace work was done, all of this "should be adding up to more than it is. The potential of these multiple efforts is not fully realized." (Anderson and Olsen 2003: 10) The reason was that,

"often peace practitioners only assume that good programmatic goals, because they are good, will in some undefined way lead to or support Peace Writ Large [the overall aim of stopping violence and building sustainable peace]. Because this connection is assumed, practitioners often do not carefully monitor their programs' real impacts on the broader peace. That is, practitioners do good things, thinking they are working for peace. But, often the connection between what they do and what is required to promote peace in that circumstance is so remote that, even if they achieve the immediate program goals, the impact of the program on broader peace is minimal." (Anderson and Olsen 2003: 12-13)

A number of explanations for this difficult to move beyond tactical learning have already been outlined in section 2: lack of time and capacity, the context in which people work and the competition between local organisations. Another factor which should also be mentioned is the value which is placed on local knowledge, which we will go on to consider now.

3.5 Local knowledge is under-valued and under-developed

In the top-down (outside-in) system in which many funding and peacebuilding policies are implemented, donors have little space for knowledge which Southern peace practitioners bring to the 'partnership'. In many instances local 'partner' organisations are 'subcontracted' to implement the pre-developed strategy of donor organisations (Edwards and Hulme 1996, Krieger 2004, Mawdsley et al. 2002, Mitlin et al. 2005) and in such situations organisations have little influence over peacebuilding strategy. Local peace workers are

critical of the lack of recognition by the donors of the local knowledge that they and their target groups have. Accountability is towards donors, not beneficiaries. Evaluation is usually done by foreign consultants. There are few examples where local knowledge is truly taken into account in the project cycle. As a result, projects that are implemented are not always the most context-relevant and effective. Most Southern practitioners are able to give examples of this. (Powell 2006, King 2004, Van Grasdorff 2005, Mawdsley et al. 2002, Verkoren 2008) And if an organisation does not have the power to determine strategy on its own, then why would it do strategic thinking?

Other aspects of the funding system also have implications for joint strategic thinking among local peace organisations – something called for by the Reflecting on Peace Practices project and others. First, local organisations compete for the same sources of funding. Since they are one another's competitors, they are reluctant to share strategic information and have no incentive to engage in joint strategy development. Second, the trend among donors to obtain demonstrable 'impact' of investments in the short-term (something demanded from them in turn by their own donors) means that they tend to shy away from financing activities that do not yield clearly visible "direct-impact" – including activities such as strategic reflection and learning. (Verkoren 2008)

This is not only to put the blame on the donors. Southern CSOs rarely challenge the project ideas that donors introduce (Mawdsley et al. 2002). Part of the reason for this is simply that they depend upon the funding for their survival. But there is another key reason. While local actors are often convinced that they have knowledge that could change and shape the way that peacebuilding is done in their area, this knowledge remains "underdeveloped". It is largely intuitive, experience-based knowledge and it has not been systematically tested, compared with other theories, or supported by scientifically-gathered empirical data. This lack of development of local knowledge makes locals insecure about raising it to challenge the assumptions of outsiders, and this makes outsiders reluctant to accept it as "legitimate" knowledge. (Grenier 1997, Mudimbe 1988, Powell 2006)

This background helps explain a finding that emerged from 105 interviews about learning and knowledge strategies held with local peacebuilders in Africa and Asia in 2006. Among the top priorities for knowledge and skills they would like to gain, 69 of these people, spread across the countries visited, said they wanted to increase their knowledge capacities: capacities for research, (joint) reflection, documentation, and knowledge dissemination. They

emphasised that instead of obtaining pre-developed knowledge, they would rather be enabled to develop their own knowledge so as to expand it and make it better researched, more rigorous, and more authoritative. From this a specific picture arises of the type of capacity development local peacebuilders need: not training programmes in which existing knowledge is transferred, but the development of their own knowledge capacities. (Verkoren 2008)

Outsiders can play an important role in third-order strategic learning, as they bring in a fresh perspective that makes it easier for them to question working assumptions and underlying theories. In other words, outsiders can ask the uncomfortable questions that trigger the learner to rethink ideas that had been taken for granted. This role of outsiders in third-order learning has been called a learning 'scaffold' (Smid and Beckett 2004).

In processes to develop local knowledge, local knowledge institutions (universities, research institutes) could potentially function as 'scaffolds'. Knowledge institutions could help to do research as well as to develop research skills. A local 'knowledge structure' could arise in which knowledge institutions, NGOs and other cooperate around learning and knowledge generation. However, in most of the countries visited during the above-mentioned research project, there was little interaction between peacebuilding NGOs and knowledge institutions (Verkoren 2008).

The theories and research findings we have discussed in this section have – sometimes explicitly and consciously, sometimes more intuitively – shaped the theories of change that lie at the basis of the ACTS programme. We turn to them now.

4. Theories of change: what we thought ACTS would do

4.1 Role of insiders in creating sustainable peace

ACTS continues to build upon a key pillar of RTC's approach: that sustainable change has to be driven by those who live and work in situations of conflict. However those who are most involved in the practical work of peacebuilding are often those who have fewest opportunities to access higher education in the field. So a basic premise driving the programme is to provide locally-based opportunities for practitioners to have access to theory, research and learning skills which will enable them to develop their own knowledge.

4.2 Action research can generate new insights into peace work

There are relatively few places where those involved in peacebuilding can access research which is both based on actual work that has taken place and written by those who have done the work. From the experience of working in peacebuilding for over fifteen years RTC knows that practitioners have a wealth of knowledge to bring to the field. However, for reasons which have already been mentioned, it remains unprocessed, untested and therefore unavailable to others.

Action research (AR) was chosen because it provides a methodology for practitioners to look at their own work in a systematic manner and relate their activities more explicitly to their aims and values, and to the theories in the field. It enables peacebuilders to analyse the effectiveness of their work, to examine and test the theories which underpin it, and to document the peacebuilding processes in their own work. In addition to analysing the work of participants, AR requires them to focus on their own role, working assumptions, and personal change and learning.

Through the use of AR, ACTS hopes to create learning practitioners who could in turn bring new learning and thinking into their organisations. In addition, as AR is in line with the theory of 'third-order' strategic learning, it can help practitioners move from tactical to more strategic learning. Its cyclical process can become a habit and may stimulate learning within organisations, whereby at every step of a project, the practitioner and his/her colleagues reflect upon the theories and ideas on which the project is based. This could help address the issue of peace organisations' lack of strategy.

So the assumption is that through close attention to the detail of the work of peace practitioners, being explicit about and testing theories, values and assumptions, and documenting their work, AR will be able to generate new insights into peace work.

4.3 Reflexive practitioners do better peace work

The concept of the reflexive practitioner is of "one who has developed the skills and habits of self-awareness, able to pay attention to our own actions and their impact, and aware of our own inner feelings and motivations." (Francis 2005). This concept can be thought of as three levels of attention: on ourselves and how we respond and behave, on the behaviour and interaction of others involved in our work, and on the overall nature and dynamics of our work.

It is often said that the process of peacebuilding work can be more important than the actual activities.: there are many different roads to peace, the important thing is how the road is travelled. Developing the skills of a reflexive practitioner may be one way in which practitioners can maintain awareness of this process, by being able to assess critically what is happening in one's daily practice, and to learn from and adapt to changing circumstances.

4.4 Through AR, ACTS can strengthen the role of Southern practitioners in theory generation and academic and policy debates

In 3.5 we saw that the knowledge of Southern peace practitioners is often 'underdeveloped' and as a result they are unable to participate on an equal basis in policy discussions with donors, academics and others. An assumption is that ACTS can help to correct this balance by generating new theories, or refining existing ones, through the action research of its participants.

4.5. Improving effectiveness

ACTS draws upon the 'key people, more people' concept introduced in section 3.1. in a number of ways:

- **Moving from more people to key people.** One aim of ACTS is to have more local people working in conflict situations who have a deep understanding of the field, the skills to engage in a strategic manner, and who are able to pass these skills and knowledge on to others. Students themselves may then become key people in their own contexts and better able to influence change. Alternatively they may develop new areas of work to target key groups of people.
- **Moving from personal to societal level.** The programme begins at the personal level with an understanding that change has to start at the individual level for it to be sustainable in any wider context. ACTS hopes to develop the ways in which individuals respond to and understand conflict, as well as the skills and capacity they have to work effectively in these situations. There is then an assumption that a student's participation in the course will also have an effect on their colleagues and organisation, and that there will be changes in their work which may lead to changes in the wider context.

Overall, ACTS aims to enable participants to look at their own work, to develop their analysis and understanding of how change can be brought about so they can identify how their work can be most effective. Are they carrying out

well-intentioned, but perhaps in effectiveness, peace work? Or are they making a strategic and effective contribution to a wider change? ACTS can then be viewed as a “learning scaffold” within which students can explore their work in a supportive and challenging environment.

5. ACTS in practice

5.1 Participants

The ACTS programme is intended for people who are already engaged in practical work for peace, and have a number of years’ experience to reflect and draw upon. An initial assumption was also made that students would have already participated in a basic level conflict transformation course, such as those already run by RTC. Given the aims of ACTS the course is open to all those who have the experience and motivation to take part in the course, and are currently involved in peacebuilding work. Those who do wish to work towards a Master’s degree need to meet additional requirements as set by the university – such as a Bachelor’s degree and English language proficiency. Those without these formal qualifications receive a certificate and are asked to produce a final reflection paper instead of a thesis.

So far the course has attracted participants working in both development and peacebuilding. They come mainly from the civil society sector (both NGO and community-based organisations). In addition to civil society actors, the course is also open to participants from other sectors, such as government and security personnel, whose applications are increasingly sought in order to diversify the student groups and allow for the use and dissemination of newly-gained capacities and research findings in more than one sector.

5.2 Curriculum and teaching team

The curriculum of ACTS consists of six modules, taught in six regional ten-day seminars over the course of two years. This set-up allows students to study and continue working at the same time: as the course is based on research in people’s own practice, much of the work is done at home. The first four modules all contain theory on various aspects of conflict and peacebuilding and focus on practical skills and developing action research. The fifth and sixth modules are left open to provide room for discussion on the action research of the participants. The course content has been designed to give students a broad understanding of the field of conflict transformation and to look at different phases of conflict in detail. The core papers which accompany each

Module One Theories of Conflict	Provides a broad overview of the theories about conflict and violence, and ways to analysing and classifying them. In addition, it deals with various schools of thinking about causes of conflict-psychological, social, political and economic.
Module Two Conflict, Power and Change	Looks at how conflict can be used as a catalyst for bringing about sustainable peace. The core paper discusses ideas and theories regarding social change, the constraints and opportunities posed by power and structures, and ways in which various actors can relate to each other to bring about change.
Module Three Transforming Violent Conflict	Addresses issues and challenges that influence the design of processes to transform situations of violence and create conditions for longer-term sustainability. In addition to the practical development of peace processes it looks at assumptions and motivations, and the roles of different actors.
Module Four Building Sustainable Peace	Analyses the post-settlement phase of conflict. It deals with the concept of post-conflict reconstruction and the various socio-economic and political aspects that come to the fore after violence has ended and the task is to re-build systems that can sustain peace. It also looks at social reconstruction, reconciliation and the rebuilding of communities.
Module Five Building Theory from Practice	Focusses on the AR of the participants, exchanging findings and experiences, reflecting on AR as a methodology and preparing for the finalisation of the theses.
Module Six Agents of Transformation	Provides a forum for students to present their research to a wider group of people in a public seminar. Also looks at the impact of the course on the students and how they will continue their practice in the future.

module were written by people with both academic credentials and practical experience, and spaces were made for the partners involved in ACTS to comment on the texts during workshops in Cambodia in 2005. The content of the module, and their corresponding core papers, is outline on page 16.

In the ACTS programme the aim has been to develop a core teaching team drawn from the region who are able to support the course group throughout the two years of their study. The members of this team have all been practitioners first and foremost but usually with some experience of academic teaching. This team is complemented by “international” tutors drawn from other regions, who are brought in for their specific expertise. Again they usually combine academic and practical expertise. In Cambodia there are few, if any, options for studying peacebuilding at a university level. As this is a new area for the university partners their main involvement has been in supporting students through the academic writing and dissertation process.

5.3 Action research in ACTS

AR is applied in ACTS in the following way. After the principles of the approach are introduced, making use of an especially developed reader, the participants first carry out small AR projects in order to experiment with the method. Next, they need to decide which aspect of their on-going work they want to research and find out how it may be improved. This research becomes the 'red line' running throughout the two-year Master programme. The participants are expected to relate the theories that are introduced during the seminars to their work and look for additional sources that may shed light on their research questions. They are asked to record their reflections and findings in both learning loops – both with regard to the work and their own role and theories – in a journal. Aided by the journals, they discuss their reflections and progress during the seminars. At the end of the course, the AR projects lead to a dissertation, which the students need to obtain their degree and which, it is hoped, may contain new or adjusted theories that can be disseminated and discussed in the wider peacebuilding field.

5.4 Academic-practitioner partnership in ACTS

Cooperation among partners has made possible the accreditation of the Master's degree by the local university – the PUC. The university has worked cooperatively with the ACTS tutors to ensure that the dissertations produced by the students were in line with what was expected at a Masters level. However, there have also been difficulties in the cooperation between the NGOs and the universities. In large part, these difficulties have revolved around AR as a methodology. It clashed to some extent with the more traditional research methods of university staff, who therefore has trouble seeing AR as valid.

There are several deeper issues underlying this discussion. First of all, there is the question of whether to consider the capacity building of the university staff – at least with regard to AR – as a positive side effect, or even an aim of the programme. As an internal ACTS document puts it, “[w]hile we want to ensure high standards and academic recognition for our students, we presumably would also want to honour and strengthen local academic capacities, rather than undermine them, and explore with them the relationship between culture and academic approach.” (Francis 2007: 23) However, as is already implied by this citation, such capacity building requires openness to the ideas and perspectives of the institution whose capacity is being built.

This leads us to the second issue: ownership. It is difficult for the universities to be true partners which 'co-own' the ACTS programme, as their lack of subject knowledge meant they could not engage with much of the course development and teaching. In addition the universities have not been part of the development of the curriculum and it was only later on that they became partners. A way to make them 'co-owners' would be to jointly adjust the methodology. But given that AR is such a central part of the theory of change of ACTS, the NGO partners are reluctant to enter into such a discussion. It is understandable that ACTS staff hesitate to make concessions on the approach that has been so carefully developed and in which they believe so strongly. Still, finding ways to develop a true partnership dialogue over content with the universities seems to be a priority as the programme moves forward. This could also help to incorporate more regional content, achieve more academic input into tutor teams and the course in general, and become more familiar with the way Masters courses are generally taught (Francis 2007).

6. Has the programme met its aims? Theories and realities of change

The aims of the ACTS programme were to develop the capacity of peacebuilding practitioners to engage in their work, to support and promote effective and strategic peacebuilding work, and to develop theory and new knowledge about peacebuilding processes from the perspectives of those who are engaged in the actual work. To what extent have these aims been met over the lifespan of the course? During 2008 the ACTS programme worked with all its students and alumni to gather their stories of change. To do this we drew on interviews with the students, their own written reflections, their AR dissertations, and observations by the tutors and ourselves. There are many stories to tell and here we will highlight just a few.

6.1 Improving practice

Nearly every student mentions their increased confidence in their own knowledge. This seems to stem partly from the learning process, where their experience is placed at the heart of the course. Over the two years of the course, they have broadened their theoretical understanding of the field and have found models and theories which support and validate the work they do. Many mention that they are no longer "afraid" of the theory and recognise the value that it brings to their work. It also provides them with a stronger base from which to talk about and explain their work to others.

Students in particular have gained enormously from simply having ready access to learning resources (especially those which provide an Asian perspective) and further information about where they can find other relevant sources. We have also seen an improvement in students' academic skills: they are reading more and developing better analytical and writing skills.

Many students are beginning to pick up the skills of reflexive practitioners. After a great deal of struggle many now see a learning journal as a key mechanism for gathering evidence and information about their work and practice, and allowing them to reflect upon and analyse their work at a later time. There is also evidence of students questioning their role and the purpose of their work. One employer wrote about the student that he "... gained skills that helped him to analyse better. People keep copying what has been done before, but they rarely wonder why they are doing it... [He] is starting to ask such questions".

The skills of reflexive practitioners become even more important when people work with groups outside their own "natural" constituency. In such situations the ACTS approach enabled participants to be aware of the personal assumptions and prejudices they might be making. A participant from the Philippines said that

"I was very suspicious of [working with] the military, because they abducted my father twenty years ago and we never saw him again. ACTS helped me to look deeper into myself, my personal bias and my role in the process. As I opened my mind I was inspired by the changes achieved... It is a step by step process... and my action research deepened this change."

Participation in the course and the process of engaging in their research has also brought many students a greater level of respect and acknowledgement from their colleagues and community. There are a number of examples of students who have been asked to become involved in mediation or run new training courses because of their new capacities.

6.2 Promoting more effective and strategic peacebuilding work

It is also clear that many students are seeing their work in a wider context. This has led some of them to include more people in their activities, from involving the wider communities in trainings to carrying out or facilitating strategic planning processes with the military. This has made people more aware of where they need to get to in the future. Students are recognising

the limitations of working only at the local, grassroots level when it comes to thinking about long-term sustainable change. One participant from Vietnam is working on domestic violence through a mediation approach. She recognises that their work at the moment is just dealing with the conflict at the surface level but wants to be able to work towards a more transformative approach in the future. Two students from Israel have been able to promote strategies within their own organisations which work with other groups such as academia, business and government. In both cases the germ of the idea was already there, but the process of ACTS enabled them to articulate why this change was important.

Many of the students are experienced practitioners who have been working in the field for a number of years. Through ACTS some have been able to develop a fresh analysis which has taken their work forward. A participant from Sri Lanka illustrates this:

“As part of my AR I analysed the conflict. Using the theory I learned in ACTS I came to see that the Sinhalese Buddhist community is legitimising state power, and that this is contributing to the conflict. However, no organisation is working with this group – the majority. Through ACTS I was able to formulate my own interpretation and analysis, not just replicate the analysis of someone else.”

Having developed a new perspective, participants test and adjust their approach to their work. For some this has led to refinements, with others it has led to new activities and projects. Examples of this include the development of new training courses, activities to work with the business community, and extending follow-up and support work.

While we have been able to see students making changes in their own work, the effect at an organisational level has been less clear. Students have taken time to share their experience with their colleagues, and some have been asked to run training courses with their organisations so others can be part of the learning, but it is unclear whether the impact has gone further than this. A number of people have talked of the difficulty of taking their learning back to their organisations. An interesting example comes from one of the Israeli participants. She said,

“I tried to introduce things I had learned in ACTS to my team of trainers and the group we were facilitating. But I [was] met with resistance. The Palestinians said it was always the Jews who were bringing knowledge. I wanted to find a

way to enable the insights to come from my colleagues. In a way I struggled to copy the ACTS method of learning, in which understanding comes from the experience of the learner and is not introduced from outside... In my organisation it was different. I introduced my knowledge in a more subtle way. I started mentioning some examples in staff and board meetings and occasionally emailing some material around. This raised people's curiosity and they asked me to do a presentation of my thesis."

Some people have been able to bring change within their organisations. This ranges from developing a new strategic direction for their organisation to include conflict and peace issues in organisational planning, to re-structuring the management of an organisation so that it better reflects its values.

6.3 Developing practitioner-based theory and knowledge about peacebuilding processes

Going beyond the students, ACTS also has a much wider aim of contributing to peacebuilding discourse from a Southern, practitioner perspective. Although the participants have learned tremendously and become more reflexive and strategic, the majority of the dissertations they have produced fall short of the quality and level desired for them to contribute to global theory and policy. Interesting in this light is the comment by an employer, who said that *"The research is not at an international academic level. But I think it is good that the ACTS course is working with people where they are. [My employee] has made incredible progress, and it would not have been good to force a level on him. This would have made for a more superficial learning."*

However what is essential to note is that the general consensus among teach staff is the academic level of the course is improving year on year. Noting that the above statement was made in 2008 it has indeed been the case that the quality of the student's work has improved greatly, and continues to do so. Today, with confidence in the standard of the work produced, the ACTS faculty is delighted to present a series of short papers from the ACTS graduates of 2011.

7. Conclusion: Implications for capacity development

After several years of ACTS, what can we conclude about the change theories on which it has been based?

7.1 Reflexive practitioners do better peace work

It is clear that ACTS has made its participants more strategic, confident and aware of the bigger picture. Most of them have also acquired a habit of reflection, learning and critical thinking in their work, and the process of AR has been important in cultivating this. This meets a need that is felt among all development practitioners, and particularly, peace workers. People working in that field have noted a lack of strategic analysis about how activities contribute to larger aims of peacebuilding. This is seen to limit the overall impact of peace work. In theory, then, ACTS' development of more strategic and reflexive practitioners can help peace work to have more impact. Has this been true in practice? The extent to which this has made their work better – more effective – is difficult to ascertain given the limited information available about their work before and after ACTS. However, some of the participants were asked to do activities specifically because they were considered to have gained expertise because of ACTS. And at least one employer felt the work of his employee had improved due to his participation in ACTS. Still, more research is needed to affirm this scattered evidence and to illuminate the extent to which it has indeed increased reflexivity that led to increased effectiveness.

7.2 Action research can generate new insights into peace work

Whilst AR in many ways seems like a natural methodology for practitioners it is important to highlight that it has been a challenge, both for tutor and students, and that it is not a quick and easy practice to pick up. In addition, it has been a difficult issue for the university. It is important that all involved in teaching and supervising AR have a common understanding of the approach and value it as a valid method. AR as a methodology is still developing and there are many variations. This understanding has given tutors the confidence to shape the methodology so that it fits the needs of the students.

But AR has proven a valuable framework to begin correcting some of the problems faced by Southern peacebuilders, namely, the lack of well-researched and articulated Southern knowledge and their shortness of time and skill to reflect strategically upon their work. AR enables practitioners not only to do

research but to do it in their own practice, consciously relating it to theory and reflecting repeatedly upon the extent to which their actions – or the theory – require adaptation. It is clear from the research and stories of change that the process of AR has given many students new insights into their own work and practice, and in some cases these have been shared with colleagues and their organisations. However many also comment that this is only the beginning and they feel further work is still required in order to be able to make more conclusive recommendations.

7.3 Through Action Research, ACTS can strengthen the role of Southern practitioners in theory generation and academic and policy debates

This is an area which requires much more attention in the future. Whilst the quality of students work is improving year on year, ACTS is not yet at a stage to definitively make a strong contribution to academic and policy debates. On the one hand we can say it will take time for an innovative programme such as ACTS to establish itself and to refine the curriculum, teaching team and the ways of supporting students in their research. However the fact that this theory-of-change has not yet been validated also highlights two issues. First, the cooperation with the universities around AR may have complicated student's research process, at least in the first courses. More fruitful academic-practitioner cooperation in supervising the research is likely to lead to better results. Second, there is a dilemma regarding the selection of participants. Should those most in need of capacity building participate? Or those who already have academic skills – so that we can better meet the aim of theory development? There is some tension here between two aims and theories-of-change, one that aims to help practitioners become more effective, and one which aims for the generation of new, quality theory.

7.4 From key people to more people

As noted at the beginning of this section, ACTS has worked effectively at the personal level. The opportunity to study the field of peacebuilding and to be part of a diverse learning community has been very significant for many students. For the ACTS partners it has affirmed a belief that learning is a vital part of peacebuilding work, and that it requires long-term support and some sort of “scaffold”, a framework or structure in which it can take place. Without this, as discussed in section three, the process of learning is inconsistent and does not go deep enough. Enough people have commented on the usefulness and applicability of the course content to their work for ACTS to be able to

say that combining work and study is a useful approach for peacebuilding practitioners who are always busy and deeply involved in their work.

ACTS alone may not build a critical mass of “more people”, although there is some evidence to suggest that there is a multiplier effect, for instance through students passing on learning from the course to their colleagues. There is also evidence that based on expertise developed through ACTS, people are being seen as “key” in their own situations. Participants have also realised the need to develop projects that work with key and more people (in their communities, in governmental organisations, etc.) and now have the confidence to undertake this work. Thus, there are examples, some quite significant, where the impact of the course has moved beyond the individual to their colleagues and organisations. However this is quite limited and highlights an area that needs to be given further consideration. How does change happen in organisations working in complex conflict environments?

Chapter 2

Challenging Perceptions

Can the ethnic poor save?

Improving micro-credit through savings in the Central Highlands of Vietnam

By Bui Ngoc Hiep

This action research project was based on the work of the two savings and credit projects in a province of the Central Highlands. This area is one of the three poorest areas of Vietnam, inhabited by many ethnic minorities. Of these groups indigenous minorities suffer the most from poverty. They often do not have regular income due to low levels of education or a lack of skills, while they also lack access to social services such as health. Many live in extremely remote areas far from the main transportation system. With regards to agricultural production, they use outdated and unproductive techniques and are hindered further by land which is not fertile. It is in light of these factors that the two projects examined in this paper were designed to support the 'ethnic poor' aiming to help improve their living conditions through micro-credit schemes.

The interventions were run by one local partner and one civil society (CS) group. While the local partner had run the project for a long time and the CS group has just started its project, the two project partners held the same negative assumptions on the capacity of the poor to repay. Based on these assumptions both organizations asked the borrowers to repay their debts at the end of the loan cycle, not really requiring them to learn to save. It is such a lack of belief in the capacity of the ethnic poor which has motivated this study, and through this paper I hope to present a challenge to this perception. As such this report seeks to answer the question: can the ethnic poor save? To accomplish this I will reflect on my involvement in these two projects, sharing the findings at large.

1. Case study: personal experience

To solve the problem which has been introduced above, I attempted to challenge the assumption of the project partners on the capacity of the poor – here the ethnic poor – to save. At the same time I also wanted to demonstrate the potential and capacity of the poor to save.

I started to work with the local partner advising them to modify their lending scheme with loans to be repaid on a regular basis by instalments. In addition to this, I also advised the partner to modify savings mechanism to help the poor practice their savings (especially voluntary savings on a regular basis) with the aim to help them build their habit of savings, as well as their own capital. To do these modifications I advised the partner to train their staff and the members on the lending scheme and savings mechanism.

The training course was conducted but the results were not as good as expected, and after meeting with people at the grassroots levels I learned that they had heard nothing about savings. Only the staff of the project had been trained and they had not disseminated the information to the people on the ground. In fact they thought that ethnic borrowers were too poor to save, and thus nothing had changed in terms of project management and approach. Finally the project of the local partner was closed due to poor performance and because of accumulating a large debt.

After the local partner I worked with a new partner which is a CS group. The lessons learned from the local partner in the previous phase were transferred to my work in this new group, as the CS organization also experienced difficulty with repayment of its borrowers. This had occurred when the borrowers lost all their crops and animals because of a typhoon at the time of repayment. They recognized that they could not accumulate the lump sum amount to repay to the project when the loan payment was due. I advised the CS group to change the mode of repayment to collecting the debts by instalments. The logic was that through this scheme savings will be promoted.

The person in charge of the CS group and its members sat down to discuss the new approach. As agreed, first the borrowers would save for their repayment by instalments. They were also encouraged to save for their future and for their own purpose. In addition the repayment of the previous loans were postponed and also divided into small amounts which could be easily repaid. The person in charge monitored the process on regular basis to ensure that the borrowers saved and help them solve any problem encountered. Every month they met each other and counted their saved money for repayment. Due to this the borrowers became confident in their capacity and in their future, as they realized they can really save, not only to repay their loans but also to build up their own resources.

What was learned in the two cases of the two partners is that change can take place if the agent really does want to change. This is true for both the partners

and the borrowers. In the first case the local partner did not want to change since it did not believe in the lending scheme which relied on repayment through instalments could work with the ethnic poor. They also believed the ethnic poor could not save because they are too poor. In fact, since they could easily get funds from the donor, they thought that there was no need to ask their people to repay their loans, or to ask them to save for themselves. In this first case the role of the partner was imposing – they did not let the borrowers think.

In the second case, the partner recognized that it did not work to let the borrowers repay their loans at the end of the loan cycle – because of the negative experiences of the recent natural disaster this method was deemed too risky. Thus the person in charge of the project sat down with the borrowers to discuss the solution, and what was realized was based on the agreement of both sides. There was no case of imposing the CS partner's ideas on the borrowers. Furthermore by participatory monitoring of the process and the practice of the borrowers in repayment and savings, the person in charge helped the borrowers build up their habit and to become more disciplined.

2. Findings

2.1 The ethnic poor can save in a way which fits their capacity and in using an appropriate mechanism

Reflecting on what happened in the CS partner's project I can say that the poor – in this case the ethnic poor – can and do save. In fact, if people were clearly taught the mechanism it was seen that they could save very well. This reaffirms what Kapoor suggested, that “the debate whether poor can save or not has become obsolete” (2010, p 5). However this was still hard to accept for many people, particularly for those who worked in the first project of the local partner mentioned above.

What was seen in the second case was that through a discussion between the members and the person in charge of the CS group the amount of savings per month was agreed on in a participatory fashion. Through taking an honest account of the members life situation a realistic and achievable figure was agreed upon and put into practice. By doing so it encouraged the members to start practicing savings, and resulted in a positive emotional change for the members. They were pleased because the amount of savings suited their capacity (i.e. what they earned in a day could help them easily repay their loan).

This point reaffirms that although the poor understands the purpose of savings, they need to be guided to do it in a way that is fitting with their capacity. People should not require them to save a large amount over an entire year or even a month without their agreement. In fact, for Abello (2010), it should start with something small, simple and evolve it over time. This should be done via an appropriate mechanism. Without an appropriate mechanism the process of saving would be doomed for the extreme poor. Even if they are able to do so without an appropriate mechanism they very often attempt to use their saved money, thus defeating the purpose of the exercise. It was mentioned that one possible way of encouraging effective savings by the poor is to do so in groups, as a mechanism for them to practice (Kapoor, 2010). Furthermore they should be guided to work in such a mechanism and tied up with their responsibility, i.e. with their family or with other members in their community. This will help build good saving practice for the members' future benefit

2.2 Success of savings initiates other ideas to save more

The poor have many reasons to save however it is important to recognize that when they succeed in this task they become motivated to save more, initiating a positive cycle. As observed in the second case with the CS partner's groups, once the members had successfully saved they felt confident to save for other purposes. Discovering this new and potent capacity the members were seen to have many ideas – often tailored to the needs of their family – such as saving to facilitate crop production, for their children's education, for their children's marriage, or for their own dream. Bage (2007) agrees that this is a common and powerful trend, noting one Ghanaian individual who was able to save enough money for her Haji. Although perhaps rare this certainly shows that the capacity of the poor to save is too often overlooked by organizations implementing micro-finance projects.

2.3 There should be discipline to help the poor to save with regular monitoring

In addition to an appropriate mechanism, there should be a discipline to help the poor effectively save. When the group members begin to practice their savings it is very important to reinforce good practice early on in the process. For Bauer, Chytilova & Morduch, (2008, p.2) "borrowers must typically repay loans in weekly or monthly instalments beginning at the very start of the loan... like the process of saving in regular increments from earned income." That is

helpful for their future in order to build up the habit of savings. To ensure the discipline is embedded and rooted in the consciousness of members, there should be a monitoring system to follow up what the members do. The reality of the second group showed that, for the poor to save a small amount at a time is not something difficult, but within their capacity. This is a building-block which should be used as a foundation for follow up activities to help further improve the lives of the poor.

2.4 Savings empower the poor

I also found out that savings, not credit, empower the poor. It was found that while the credit is a tool to help people get money for their income generating activities, saving is something which really helps the members discover their strength and their potential to escape poverty (Wilson, Harper and Griffith, 2010). The people in the second case were very proud of their savings and became confident when they proved to be able to save.

Moreover, savings helps them to be less dependent on credit funds on a long term basis and helps them get out of poverty in a sustainable manner. The project of the CS group also introduced the members to other roles of savings, especially voluntary savings, which particularly helps them build up their own capital, and implement what they plan for their own future. For Branch, savings – especially voluntary savings – “enable households to smooth consumption in the face of uneven income flows, to accumulate assets for the future, to invest in education, and to better prepare for emergencies.” To be in such a position certainly empowers those trapped in the poverty cycle.

Llanto (2004, p.28) also noted that “rural financial institutions would be sustainable and viable with savings mobilization, thus weaning them away from state or donor fund infusion.” Hence, with savings by the poor to build up their own assets, they become independent from credit funds, and find themselves empowered in yet another way.

3. Conclusion

This paper has attempted to shed light on whether the ethnic poor are capable of saving, and contest the opinion that it is a capacity which the poor struggle to possess. In discussion of this question we have seen a case study which reflected upon the experiences of two projects in the Central Highlands in Vietnam, and from this account several important findings were made.

Centrally, from what was seen in the above paragraphs it can be confidently stated that the ethnic poor can save – a feat many did not credit the group with. In fact while many believe in the importance of providing vulnerable groups with subsidies or loans, this paper suggests that delivering good guidance and appropriate mechanisms to save are far more constructive in the long-run. In practice this may be something as simple as conducting participatory discussions to determine a realistic target savings amount which does not stretch the individual beyond their means.

However we have also observed something quite unique – the capacity to save is not only a practical skill but a phenomenon which has larger consequences for the individual and their family. It is a means for the poor to become empowered through discovering new possibilities and by finding confidence in themselves. This is particularly apparent with voluntary savings.

It is also indicated that partners dealing in with micro-finance often paid more attention to credit rather than savings. This paper argues that the latter should be the most important focal point when seeking to bring about change in the life of the ethnic poor through micro-finance. Through the use of trainings which teach people to save, especially in ways which foster the ability to voluntarily save, the lives of the poor can be truly transformed.

Finally, let me express that as a consultant specializing in micro-finance, I strongly believe in the ideas expressed in this paper. Taking a participatory and responsible approach to micro-credit interventions holds crucial importance for the sustainability of these projects, and I endeavour to spread this message – and advocate its practical application – to all those who practice this field.

Discussing the ethnic dimensions of the Taliban movement Conflict, ethnicity, and human rights in Afghanistan

By M. Hussain Hasrat

The Taliban as an ethno-political movement emerged in 1994 in Afghanistan and took political power of around 95 percent of the country after only two years. At the onset of the mujahedeen's ethno-civil war in the 1990s, the Taliban movement was relatively non-existent and was not even credited with a name. It is because of this level of anonymity that their prompt appearance and infamous success shocked Afghans and the world, who were left with one burning questioning: who are the Taliban?

Today, although the conflict has taken a new face, this question is still at the forefront of discourse on the conflict in Afghanistan. Great efforts have been made to try and explain the re-emergence of the Taliban in an attempt to account for how they landed the world in one of the worst quagmires to date. Yet despite numerous studies about the philosophy of the Taliban's rising and the dynamics of their social and cultural context, there is still no convincing argument which paints a comprehensive picture.

Therefore in an attempt to contribute to the growing collection of literature which hopes to illustrate the realities of the Taliban, this action research project has chosen to focus on the ethnic dimensions of the Taliban movement. This report is based on various data sources, including insights shared by the staff of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), the ideas of various Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and several perspectives of Afghan intellectuals. Furthermore this project hopes to show that the proper analysis of conflict – one which accounts for context-specific factors – is a crucial element in the larger process of building sustainable peace.

To achieve this end the report's various sections draws out key findings and their implications on the conflict-context in Afghanistan. The most significant issues which are discussed are: the social and political background of conflict, the various aspects of ethnicity (including the occurrence of intra-ethnic conflict) which has led to the rise of the Taliban and civil war, and the failure of the Mujahedeen to adequately fill the political vacuum following their defeat of the soviet regime. Other issues which will be touched upon while developing the key points are tribalism, ethnocentrism, the ethno-geography of war, and the roots of violent and

terrorizing actions of the Taliban. "In addition to these topics we will look briefly towards some of the perspectives on how to attempt to transform such a deeply rooted and complex conflict." Finally, from the subject matter presented in this document and the conclusions which are drawn out, a series of recommendations will be made.

1. Social and political background

The multi-ethnic Afghan society has been governed and monopolized for nearly three centuries by a dominant Pashtun ethnic group. However the ethno-nationalism and ethnic hegemony of Pashtuns changed promptly after the Soviet Union invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. The apex of this transformation in the social and political structures of Afghan society was that the many ethnic groups became fully aware of the politics and power, and thus sought more inclusive systems.

Most ethnic groups had participated in the Jihad (or struggle) against the Soviet Union, and upon ousting the occupying force they raised their voices with the wish to have an active role in the post-Soviet order. This changed the conventional power structures, and Pashtun Mojahedin (specifically Hekmatyar, as an effective embodiment of Pashtuns at that time) could not reclaim the social and political role they had become accustomed to. As a result they lacked position in so-called Islamic state of Afghanistan in 1990s.

After the establishment of the Islamic political regime in Afghanistan the Mujahedeen faced several complicated issues. On one hand it can be said that their multi-ethnic composition allowed for more open discussion and the opportunity for a participative political structure. However on the other hand it can be claimed that the failure to build a united and all-inclusive structure for satisfying these ethnic groups in fact facilitated the rising of the Taliban. In addition Hekmatyar's fighting with the Shurayee Nezar party (lead by Masaod), motivated by the hope of monopolizing the power in the country, eventually failed. This added to the protracted ethno-political conflict between ethnic groups in Kabul and, in combination with the weak presence of Pashtuns in the Afghanistan Islamic State, can be seen as giving momentum to the Taliban movement.

As previously mentioned, following the rapid emergence of the Taliban in 1994 the group assumed control of nearly 95% of Afghanistan. This was accomplished largely through violent conflict, and mostly with non-Pashtuns Mujahedeen. Additionally the victory was only achieved in such a short time

(1994-1996) because of the strategic and tactical support of Al-Qaeda and Pakistan. This support ensured that later on the Taliban would provide a safe haven for Al Qaeda's leadership and combatants, allowing space for both training and operations.

After 9/11 the Taliban were recognized as the main allies/supporters of Al-Qaeda and its leader Osama ben Laden. After he publicly claimed responsibility for the event the United States issued an ultimatum to the Taliban leadership: hand over Osama or face attack and a hard-line response. The Taliban's leaders persisted on protecting Osama which resulted in the Taliban regime being removed from power by the United States and NATO countries in 2001.

2. Findings

2.1 The ethno-geography of war

After the United States attack in 2001 the Taliban dissolved and their military capabilities broke down, rendering them unable to operate and fight directly against United States, NATO forces, and the Afghan National Army (ANA). As a result they gradually resorted to guerrilla warfare and presented a significant challenge to US troops thereafter.

Since guerrilla warfare relies on the ability to hide within the community in the area of fighting, the Taliban are undertaking their campaign mostly in the south and eastern parts of Afghanistan, where Pashtuns are living. In other words, the Taliban retreated to operate in areas where the movement gathered its strength in 1994. Thus, the ethno-geography of insurgency is mostly the same as the physical boundaries of the Pashtun ethnic groups.

The coincidence of war zone and ethnic belt mostly emanates from two significant factors. The first is the emergence of a range of structural disagreements between Pashtuns and what they called 'non-Pashtuns,' particularly in the political and economic realms during the preceding thirty years. The second is the 'Durand Line' conflict between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The Durand Line is defined as an official border by Pakistan however as of now this has not been yet recognized by Afghanistan. Problematically the Afghan-Pakistan Pashtuns are divided by this line and elements of the same ethnic group live on both sides of the border. Hence now most of the Ghalzais, who constitute the largest portion of Taliban fighters and are the second major tribe of Pashtun ethnic group, are living along the Durand Line while enjoying sanctuary on both sides.

2.2 Explaining the Taliban's violence

Along with a reflection on the ethno-geography of war it is also important to know the root causes of the extensive violence of the Taliban. Most of my action research interviewees said unanimously that the Taliban's terror and violence has cultural and historical roots. For example most of the Taliban and their leadership belong to tribes and sub-tribes where the culture of warfare and violence are common and accepted. The interviewees also commented that growing up in such environment has definitely affected the way which they act.

In addition to the above, the interviews showed consensus on the idea that the Taliban's brutal behaviours and attitudes mainly emanate from the environment in which they have been trained and have lived, specifically in religious schools. They are trained to be harsh and intolerant against 'Kafirs', a term used to refer to non-Muslims and to those who do not have the same perspective as the Taliban (Male, AIHRC, July, 10, 2011). Moreover, there is overt support from regional players who encourage the continuation of the Taliban's terror and violence within Afghanistan. The Taliban's insurgency and campaign are fed by international terrorism and Islamic fundamentalist supporters in order to put US and NATO troops under significant pressure, and to guarantee their regional strategic interests. At the same time, the close connection between the Taliban's tribalism and terror in the Pashtun communities, following 30 years of war, motivates them to resort to violent acts.

2.3 Traditionalism

The wide spread traditionalism with certain codes of practice in Pashtun areas is also cited as a source of the Taliban's insurgency. There is a custom amongst Pashtun called "Malmastia", or hospitality, which means if a guest comes to one's home as a refugee the host is responsible to protect them. It is mostly done without considering the consequences, even if it costs the host's life. Thus, this code provides a guarantee for those insurgents who come from the many Pashtun areas and wish to take refuge in other places. They can easily attack on Afghan police, civilians, US, and NATO troops with the support of a tribal guarantee of protection and support. Exploiting and manipulating tribal and ethnic customs helps the Taliban to penetrate and find their base in such tribal areas, and run their campaign readily (Male, AIHRC, July, 10, 2011).

2.4 CSOs and AIRHC Peace Activism

In such a complicated tribal and traditional society it is useful to look at the role of civil society, intellectuals, and the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) in facilitating conflict transformation and helping achieve sustainable peace.

In the AIRHC I have found three kinds of voices. The first and foremost is persistence that human rights-based peace processes and conflict transformation mechanisms are central tools for propagating peace in Afghanistan. As the Taliban is a well-known terrorist group with one of the worst human rights records in Afghanistan this seems extremely justified.

With regards to their role, the AIRHC's perspective on current peace talks is clear. In the 10 interviews conducted with the AIHRC staff it was agreed that the AIHRC has fulfilled its assigned responsibility. However they state they are still trying to convince the main conflict parties to work towards sustainable peace, rather than only seeking to reach temporary ceasefire. The AIHRC is adamant that if the peace process is not accompanied by justice it will at most be a short break between two wars.

The AIRHC's primary concern is justice and people's grievances. Thus it has been expressed in the interviews conducted that justice – particularly giving opportunity for the voices of victims to be heard – is the precondition for any kind of peace process. The AIHRC insists on satisfying the grievances of the Afghan people, and if this can be accomplished it would automatically facilitate the prospect for peace and stability.

The second concern expressed in the interviews was that AIRHC's core mandate is not peace-building and conflict transformation, since the constitution has clearly defined its responsibility as the promotion, protection, and monitoring of human rights in Afghanistan. Accordingly, it has been stated that whilst the involvement of the AIHRC has certainly been remarkable, human rights issues are so immense in the country that there is no room for the AIHRC to deviate from its core mandate to turn to conflict resolution and peace talks (Male, AIHRC, June, 27, 2011).

The third issue which arose indicates some weakness and passivity of AIHRC, as they have resisted becoming involved in peace processes and/or conflict transformation issues during the last eight or nine years. Most of the current peace talk and peace-building efforts have not considered human rights as

values central to their success. The silence of AIHRC is thus a great weakness, as they should recognize this gap and advocate for the inclusion of the human rights lens in any analysis of peace and conflict in Afghanistan. This is in fact not only a lesson for the AIHRC staff, but one which should be embraced by civil society activists in the fields of peace-building and conflict transformation.

2.5 The Pashtun crisis

Furthermore, in order to continue the discussion of the roles of the AIHRC and civil society organizations in peace talks with Taliban, we must mount a discussion of who the Taliban actually are. As is known the Taliban are not only a simple black and white phenomenon, instead they are a very complicated movement. Along with their extreme tribal identity and affiliation, there are significant elements of intra-ethnic conflict.

For example, the presence of Ghelzai's tribes and their thirst for more power and opportunity is often a central motivation for the Taliban's internal dynamics. Likewise the Durrnai's tribes have been gradually been side-lined during the last thirty years of conflict, and this has led to a significant rise in tensions. Such intra-ethnic conflict is often exploited by external actors according to their agendas, for example one Pashtun tribe has been placed in the periphery and now is receiving support (and even management) from the intelligence agencies of neighbouring countries. The most interesting – and confirmed – example of such efforts can be seen in the period of resistance against Soviet Union, which the Ghalzai's tribes of Pashtun were the main recipients of financial aid and weaponry from the United States.

Consequently, I have found that some of civil society's activists are converging on the term 'Pashtun crisis,' which is used to express the most significant issues relating to Taliban and current insurgency. As explained earlier most of the Taliban's behaviour is embedded in their specific social, cultural, and religious averment. However at the same time it is apparent that their thinking style and behaviour also emanates from what we have called the 'Pashtuns crisis.' The Pashtuns also commonly consider themselves the founders of modern Afghanistan, and as such believe they must assume a dominant position and decisive role in Afghanistan. With such a widespread narrative amongst Pashtuns they find it difficult to adjust themselves to the reality, and to the extensive changes which have taken place since 1979. In general the term 'Taliban' is often used to describe a current insurgency, mostly in Pashtuns areas, and one resulting out of a complex correlation of ethnic, geographic, political, and social factors.

3. Conclusion and recommendations

I am concluding this paper by stressing the importance of the term 'Pashtun crisis,' which I explained in the paragraphs above.

What has been shown is that presently in Afghanistan there is an extremely complex array of ethnic dimensions involved in conflict, and these issues are neither easy to identify nor resolve. In particular what we have noted is that the widespread prevalence of tribalism and traditionalism alongside attempts to build a participatory and democratic system is paradoxical. Most of the ethnic groups in Afghanistan have their own narratives, without considering the broader context in which around 55 ethnic groups are living, and this mounts serious concerns for any peace process.

The ethno-geography of war, namely the obvious coincidence of violent conflict with the ethnic belt of Pashtuns, indicates the worst reality. Focusing the war efforts in the southern and eastern parts of Afghanistan is, as shown, not a conspiracy planned outside of the country. This statement has been confirmed through the analysis of ethnic and tribal structures, the sources of specific behaviours, and also in the interviews conducted for this action research. Meanwhile we must not forget that the connection of war and ethnic boundaries is itself a conflict factor which perpetuates violence by further motivating the Taliban insurgency.

Islamic fundamentalism and terrorist actions legitimated through religious beliefs have also provided a good ground for the Taliban to sustain war. They can easily mobilize people in the areas where their voices can be heard, but according to Islamic values it is apparent they are following their own policy and interest.

To fix and transform this complicated situation, effective civil society organizations and human rights institutions (like the AIHRC) are required. Whilst we have seen that these organizations are in fact making significant contributions to peace and stabilization in Afghanistan, it has also been shown that these organizations are not acting to their fullest capacity and need to be more proactive.

4. Recommendations

As we have seen the reality and reasons behind the Taliban movement, and suggested that the human rights and civil society organizations should become more involved in peace processes and conflict transformation projects, I have made the following recommendations:

The first and foremost recommendation is the complete disarmament of the Taliban. While the Taliban has the power to challenge the US, NATO troops, and the ANA, the Afghan people will trust them during peace talks. Disarmament can be implemented in various ways. The US and NATO countries can, for example, place significant pressure on Pakistan to stop supporting the Taliban. Alternatively the Afghan government could initiate a clear peace process and mobilize the southern and eastern parts of country to stop supporting the Taliban. However perhaps the most effective approach would be a combination of many different activities.

The second recommendation is to implementing a transitional justice plan. The last thirty years of war, specifically the years of the Taliban regime, left many victims in its wake. Thus sustainable peace and structural conflict transformation necessitates hearing their voices and prioritizes the issue of justice.

The third recommendation is to establish a truth commission. The South African experience is both useful and an applicable lesson to consider when creating a strategy for its application in Afghanistan. The Afghan people's countless grievances and their unheard voices have to be considered in every peace process and conflict transformation agenda. A truth commission can be a structure for peace with the presence of United Nation and distinguished experts.

Finally, the AIHRC must take an effective role in monitoring and evaluation of the peace talk processes with the Taliban. This can be done only when AIHRC shows its willingness. The AIHRC must also not critique the Mujahedeen and the Taliban as a group, as this act as a spoiler for peace in a process which otherwise means well. Unfortunately this critique is predictable – perhaps unavoidable – when the AIHRC faces issues like countless records of human rights violation by the Mujahedeen and the Taliban. This only reaffirms that while the issues should not be neglected, it must be approached as one which is particularly sensitive.

Chapter 3

Designs for Peace

Initiating the development of a peace curriculum for youth An innovative strategy for conflict transformation in Bangladesh

By Shinjita Alam

Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries in the world where, according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (2003), the adolescent and youth (10-24 years) constitute approximately 23% of the total population. The majority of the people are also illiterate and unaware about their rights, as well as other necessary elements of human dignity.

After 40 years of independence Bangladesh has made much progress in developing its economic, social and political sectors, yet it stands currently second in the world in terms of domestic violence in different forms (Akther, 2004, p.5). Efforts to prevent domestic violence have been minimal and children and youths are regularly exposed to severe forms of physical and mental violence, both at home and in institutions.

Problematically this is not seen as violence in our societal culture. It is widely accepted by the various societies that using emotional and physical violence over children will help them grow and learn to behave in acceptable manner. Parents who hit or torture their children have often themselves had a history of violent treatment by their parents when they were children. Therefore, domestic violence functions as a cycle of violence which needs to be addressed and stopped.

Apart from this, children who are constantly exposed to physical punishment face risk of losing their self-confidence, self-esteem, developing negative behaviour, and becoming aggressive in their actions. As a result of these issues physical fighting among youth seems one of the most common and visible forms of violence in Bangladesh. They fight among each other whenever they find disagreements or differences. It is in fact unfortunate to see a young generation of a country becoming more and more violent, and losing the moral values which deter violence as a means of resolving conflict.

Therefore it is clear that there is a lack of a systematic way of breaking this cycle of violence among youth in our society, and as such this needs to occur through a process of building skills and (re)developing positive values among youth.

In Bangladesh several organizations implement activities to protect the rights of women and children, but to my knowledge there is no organization other than Friends of Peace which works in helping youth with peace building. Friends of Peace, the organization I work with, takes initiative to reduce violence among youth by helping them to develop skills and positive attitudes.

Research problem

Peace education is one of the most important aspects in my organization. It helps to build the skills and knowledge of youth, with an expectation of reducing the violence which they create in society. Even though my organization has conducted several peace trainings for youth in the past it has not follow a systematic approach. Therefore, the problem is that violence caused by youth, and violence towards youth (which leads to a vicious cycle of violence, as illustrated above) remains the same in spite of my organization's efforts.

In order to balance this need for a methodical approach to teaching peace amongst youth, a peace education curriculum must be developed. Such a tool would help address and follow-up the need of the youth that Friends for Peace works with, and hopefully initiate a move towards sustainable peace in Bangladesh. Thus my research goal is to initiate a process of developing a peace curriculum for the youth that Friends of Peace in Bangladesh are working with. These youth are mostly students, from various religious groups, and aged between 16 and 24.

Research design

This study adopted the action research design and is guided by the cycles of analysis, planning, action, and reflection. This action research includes three action cycles. The first cycle focused on me. The second cycle dealt with my work and my organization's interventions in peace education for youth, and includes all of our perspectives. The third cycle looked into the contribution of the youth and their perspective on peace education.

I collected data and inputs regarding this research from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data came from the consultation meeting/workshop with my colleagues, the FDG with a youth volunteer group, and from informal communication with staff. Secondary data came from the literature sources, as I reviewed theories and annual reports of my organization.

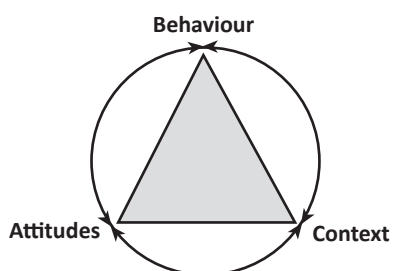
I gathered all the data and developed a code to conduct the analysis. The quantitative data was gathered by using the simple count method which included the number of sessions conducted by my organization, and the number of participants attending each session. For the analysis of qualitative data I have used narrative data analysis. As I asked open-ended questions, I have written all the answers, reviewed these in contrast to the questions, and then categorized and interpreted the information.

Especially in action research, data analysis is done in all the cycles of the research, as the analysis of data from one cycle is used to plan the next cycle and so forth.

1. Understanding violence in Bangladesh

The situation in Bangladesh is very complex, as the society has a long history of violence. Therefore one could see violence as cultural phenomena, deeply rooted in the structures of accepted behaviours and attitudes. That is why it is important to explore and analyse such culture and look for ways to overcome them.

Johan Galtung (1975, p.135) explained the comprehensive concept of violence. According to him direct violence (i.e. destructive behaviour) is a visible form of direct, physical action, but cultural and structural violence – which contribute to the manifestation of direct violence – are often hidden under the surface. This is true in Bangladeshi society. In order to stop the cycles of direct violence one needs to look deep into the cultural and structural explanations of violence. Helping the society to overcome these negative perceptions and attitudes may be a way to address the deep culture of violence in Bangladesh.



In order to delve in-depth into the reasons for violence committed by youth in Bangladesh I have used an adaptation of Galtung's (1990) ABC Triangle tool, also known as the violence triangle, by Fisher et. al. (2000, p. 9).

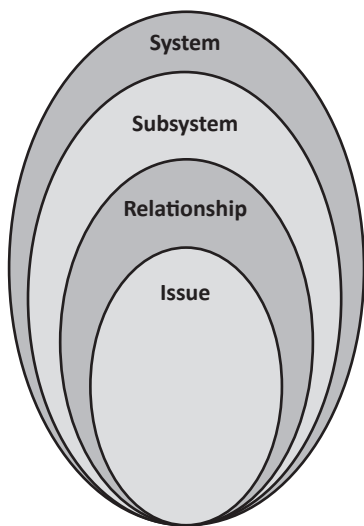
This tool helps to illustrate the important circular influence and dynamics between the three main dimensions of conflict. The attitude is constituted by the feelings and values which are symptoms of human rights violation, and the context is representative of the structure or systems in the society or state. For example negative attitudes, situated in a context which does not have the capacity to resolve conflicts non-violently will

result in violent behaviours. These actions will help feed back into attitudes and perceptions, making the cycle of violence increasingly difficult to break.

It is also useful to look towards Dugan’s (1996) model she refers as ‘Nested Paradigm,’ which helps to identify the multiple dimensions of the perspectives of different people and their causes. Please examine the figure to the left: here we see that the entire object represents conflict, and within this phenomenon are four differing levels of analysis.

Lastly I have also taken into account the ‘Progression of Conflict’ (Lederach’s [1995] adaptation of a diagram by Curle [1971]), which suggests that the movement from an unpeaceful to peaceful relationship can be charted by comparing levels of power with the levels of awareness of conflicting interest and needs.

2. Findings



In this chapter I summarize the important aspects of my research and described the overall outcomes. As the facilitator of the process I gained much knowledge and was happy to be part of the change it produced. All the findings bellow came from the rich data collected, and the supporting theories were used to test my assumptions and research question. The findings are summarized according to the themes that emerged.

2.1 Goal of peace education of youth

We felt that using the participatory process was extremely important in order to understand the goal of peace education of youth in Friends for Peace. Together we agreed and identified a two-part goal. First, we hope to prevent the continued cycles of violence, especially as the youth hold the greatest potential and are the future leaders of Bangladesh. Second, we wish to promote knowledge, skills, values, and positive attitudes, to bring about behavioural changes that will enable youth to prevent and resolve conflict, and avoid violence.

Through our discussion we realized that bringing about behavioural changes through peace education in our situation would be difficult because the current

behaviours have not been formed in a vacuum. They are nested within the context of the family, peer group, community and in the larger society – i.e. the various levels of the ‘Nested Paradigm’ diagram (Dugan, 1996). Therefore peace education must help to promote the development of peaceful values as an overarching human quality.

We agreed that – if carried out correctly – peace education for youth will be able to respond to conflict positively, and thus violence among them will be reduced. Youth, in the setting described in the sections above, certainly need the skills of negotiation, problem solving, and communication if they should hope to succeed in resolving conflicts without resorting to violence. It was these ideas that confirmed to us that a new way of thinking of creative approaches to peace education for youth is important, but we also agreed that it is equally important to first understand the power of our own perceptions of peace in our context.

It was realized that to be successful a culture of peace needs to be promoted through systematic peace education for youth. We found that peace curriculum is paramount as it is the main body of knowledge which needs to be delivered to change attitudes and behaviours, thus changing the context. Our aim of peace education of youth is to promote knowledge, skills and attitudes through cooperative and participatory learning methods. We need to develop a plan to achieve these goals, including: content selection, sequence of content, and methods. To ensure peace education of good quality we need a curriculum through which youth can acquire the essential learning tools needed to gain the knowledge, skills, and attitudes critical to their own lives, and to their constructive participation in the society.

2.2 Elements of peace curriculum suitable for youth in Bangladesh

After discussing how to make a peace curriculum for youth suitable for the context of Bangladesh we identified some fundamental guiding principles. We found that values and attitudes will play a vital role in the curriculum because they influence learning. Additionally skill development is another element which we need to be included in the peace curriculum for youth.

By undertaking peace education for youth in my context, we do not expect to directly deliver values; rather it is a key activity which is needed to encourage reflection and the independent development of personal values on five levels. These are as follows:

Values related to self and others

The definition of peace used by Friends of Peace is “Caring self, others and the planet” and as such this category is found to be particularly important in the peace education design. We recognize that for a caring self we first need self-awareness. This is a complicated concept and is composed of many diverse components, including self-identity, self-culture, self-anger, tolerance, truthfulness, and trust. Once we are able to understand the image of ourselves it will help us relate to, and reflect on, our relationship with others.

Values and attitudes related to cooperation

Once we understand the values related to self and others, it is then important to focus on values which promote cooperation with others through mutual understanding, respect, and trust. Through our discussion we found that our peace education for youth will seek to instigate change, to transform negative values and attitudes. It is important to change our violent behaviour into positive aspect, and therefore it found vital that we include into our curriculum how to be cooperative instead of competitive.

Values and attitudes related to spirituality

As previously mentioned one result of the focus group was establishing the need to emphasize the establishment of a culture of peace in Bangladesh. Since all people in Bangladesh are allowed to practice their own religion, spirituality can be identified as holding a vital role in our culture. On this basis we found that spirituality must be a central element in the peace curriculum should we hope to positively transform the values and attitudes in the youth. Interestingly, a point which was raised was that it is also important to understand our own religion as many of us simply copy the practice without knowing anything about the religion, and to fully embrace the peaceful aspects of any tradition you must have a deep and clear understand of it. Therefore we resolved to undertake inner-peace, interfaith dialogue through the peace curriculum in order to nurture the culture of peace.



Communication skills

While this point seems relatively obvious, the group decided it was a central theme in instilling peaceful attitudes and behaviours in the youth. Communication, it was agreed, is in fact the foundation of peace and it was expressed that, in particular, we need to have communication skills to be cooperative to others. Therefore, we found listening and interaction skills are some of the most important aspects to be incorporated into the curriculum.

Conflict resolution skills

While communication is the foundation of peace, conflict resolution skills are the tool which upholds it. Interestingly, during my discussion with youth they strongly expressed their desire to understand about violence, for example, why do we become violent without knowing anything? After developing this grounding on the theories of violence and conflict we may look towards how to prevent and resolve its occurrence. As conflict a normal part of life learning to deal with it in a positive way is essential. Therefore, conflict analysis and resolution skills need to be priority of peace curriculum for youth in Bangladesh.

Methods of facilitation

During our discussion we agreed that in peace education the group's (i.e. those members of Friends of Peace) own experiences, needs, and understandings are the raw materials for the content of the training. We identified some

facilitation methods that we can use in my context; these include games, role playing, drama, film, drawing, painting, group work, etc. What is apparent is that there are many creative options which must be plausible methods to disseminate the qualities which we discussed above. Certainly when revisiting this concept to draw up a detailed curriculum we will have to think more carefully about which methods to use, and in what order.

3. Conclusion

Through this action research project we were able to initiate the process of developing peace curriculum in my context. Together we identified the overall level of violence but also noted the cyclical nature of this violence as the main sources of our motivation for this project. We also identified the shape of the peace curriculum including the centrally important topics of self-awareness, cooperation, spirituality, communication, and conflict resolution. Finally we briefly discussed the plausible methods of facilitation, and while determining several exciting possibilities decided that these must be more closely examined when designing the curriculum itself.

Overall this process has tested our knowledge and skills, as it is an exercise which has not been attempted in our context before. We have learned from the process that there are enormous possibilities for developing a peace curriculum through action and reflection learning. However it is also apparent that this is not a short-term project but one which requires long-term dedication and commitment. Yet Friends for Peace is not dissuaded by this prospect; instead we remain committed to the concept of peace education for youth and view it as a fundamental tool for instigating the positive transformation of conflict in Bangladesh.

As was seen early on in the paper violence in this context is a very complex issue, and unfortunately also a commonplace occurrence. We have suggested that because so many people have had violence committed against them as children and throughout their life, violence has become a normalized and 'natural' cycle. As this violence is deeply rooted in structural and cultural systems (which must be addressed to achieve positive peace), the youth are an essential focal point for peacebuilding activities. They are the future of our society and Bangladesh's future leaders, and to educate them through an effective and systematic peace curriculum would be a move towards a generational change in attitudes, values, and behaviours.

However perhaps the most valuable lessons of this action project are the lessons I learnt about myself. During its course I underwent an exciting journey which helped me to discover myself in another capacity. This research has inspired and motivated me to strive to further my knowledge of peace education for youth, and continue to struggle for peace in Bangladesh. Having realized the importance of other perspectives, of identifying needs, and filling the gaps, I hope to interlink the idea of peace education for youth into my practice in the future. Particularly I have learned to focus on myself as well as others, a quality which has enhanced my overall capacity. I can firmly state that through this assignment I have changed from content-oriented person to a reflexive person.

Conceptual design of a Cambodian Peace Museum Integrating architecture and peacebuilding

By Delia María Dávalallescás

Cambodia's current post-conflict situation has been shaped by the many events of its complex history. There are various initiatives to commemorate the past and to pursue accountability; some examples are the Genocide Museum, Killing Fields, Stupas and even the genocide trial. These efforts are all part of the wider political reconciliation process. Nevertheless little has been done to use these existing systems as mechanisms to heal Cambodian society into the emotional and social levels.

There is one initiative by Khmer Rouge survivor, civil war combatant, and Cambodian peacebuilder Soth Plai Ngarm, who envisioned the framework entitled Preventing Future Genocide: A Vision for a Peace Museum in Cambodia (Soth Plai, 2007). My role in this project has been to design the physical space that will embody this framework. The Center for Peace and Conflict Studies (CPCS), a space for practitioners to research, study, and learn of the practice of peace and conflict was the stage for this collaboration. Moreover, this project created an opportunity of collaboration between regions and continents (namely Cambodia and Guatemala³), and the fields of architecture and peacebuilding.

This research questioned the symbolism the museum should use in order to prevent genocide and further violent conflict using a culturally sensitive approach to the Cambodian context. In addition it hopes to identify the appropriate symbolism that could physically support the learning and discussion of the past, the present process of peacebuilding, and help society envision a peaceful future.

This project targets Cambodian users who want to learn about and reflect on the experience of the conflict in Cambodia. Although this is the primary target group, the museum would also be a resource for foreigners that want to learn and develop a deeper understanding of the process of conflict transformation in this context.

³ Guatemala, Central America. A country that experienced protracted conflict from the 1960's until the signature of 11 Peace Agreements between the Government of Guatemala and the Guerrillas in 1996.

1. Methodology of the research

The methodology of the research is that of Action Research, using primarily a qualitative approach. It aims to collect and process information to guide the architectural design of the Peace Museum (PM) for Cambodia, through a peacebuilding perspective. The research was performed in four cycles: The first one was the dissection process, including the local perspective of my client, Soth Plai Ngarm, and my own perspective after living in Cambodia for 2 years.

The second cycle involved looking for linkages between the Cambodian context and the global perspective. This was carried out through an art-based Focus Group Discussion (FDG), involving 83 participants of the Summer Peacebuilding Institute (SPI) held at the Eastern Mennonite University in Virginia, USA. In addition to these reflections and learnings, my studies at the SPI focused on arts, media, research, peacebuilding and reconciliation, and I endeavored to link these fields to this project.

The third cycle was a stage of summarizing, processing, and creating. This took place during the integration of the lessons-learned into the conceptual design, i.e. the creation of a graphic proposal of the characteristics of the building. Finally, the fourth cycle was a period of revising the conceptual proposal with my client and consolidating the architectural perspective with the assistance of the Guatemalan architect Alex Gálvez.

One of the main limitations of the research was the difficulties posed by the language barrier. Languages require a cultural context, and the essence of concepts, traditions, and words would often require further explanation in order to overcome the difficulties. This was due to the fact that both researcher and participants were having to communicate in a language that was not their native tongue. An additional concern is that through translation it is easy to lose context and meaning, and this is a serious threat to producing a meaningful and accurately representative design. However this was overcome by the repetition of questions in different formats to ensure that the meaning taken from the conversation was the meaning intended by the participant. This was combined with attempts to practically experience the cultural context that was being referred to, and this often provided invaluable insight.

2. The complex dynamic of a peace museum

Generally, museums are understood to be centres for conservation, study, and reflection on heritage and culture (unesco.org, 2007). Moreover, Peace Museums are institutions which have an interest towards peace education

and art (Duffy, 1993, p. 4). They are a phenomenon which was born following the end of World War I, and they have been evolving ever since.

Duffy (1993) classifies museums in several categories: (1) peace museums, (2) thematic museums, (3) museums oriented to humanitarian relief, (4) and galleries. Currently in Cambodia we can find Duffy's second classification; the Genocide Museum and the Killing Fields are thematic museums. This noted it is apparent that a place which collects the past and envisions the future does not yet exist. Furthermore, prominent peace scholar and practitioner Johan Galtung views most existing peace museums as being anti-war museums. He also specifies some criteria of a Peace Museum that are more effective at building positive peace:

"It should inform us about peace, how to handle contradictions nonviolently and creatively; not only having little or no violence or it could exhibit violence, war and peace in terms of "bellogens" producing war and derive one road to peace and even conflict transformation. It should also contribute to world peace through education as a museum in principle is total education impinging on all faculties: eyes (reading viewing), ears (listening) and the vocal chords (speaking), motion (walking), touching (when permitted), smelling (religion uses incense), tasting (drinks and food in the cafeteria should be adjusted to the exhibits); a good museum would suggest a walking track but should facilitate designing alternative trajectories to avoid feeling processed by some museum designer with messages to be walked in the "correct" order; it should exhibit human, social and world normality with little or no violence....normal life is very often harmonious, not quarrelsome, non violent, friendly and loving; it should be made very clear that everybody can contribute to peace. Peace should be seen as people creation, not as elite domination, and creation would cover both material and spiritual production; it should show peace as process with peaceful conflict transformation." (Galtung, 2008, pp. 154-155)

In Soth Plai Ngarm's framework (2007) the peace museum's ability to contribute to the process of conflict transformation is seen through three different dimensions: (1) political, (2) social, and (3) emotional and spiritual. (See Figure 1).

This mechanism includes components from the Restorative Justice framework, which addresses the needs of the actors involved (i.e. victims, perpetrators and the community), and by rehumanizing them the trauma healing journey is able to begin.

Figure 1: How important elements might be achieved through peace museum (Soth Plai, 2010)

PEACE MUSEUM MECHANISM								
Dimension	Truth	Justice	Memory and history	Reparation	Healing	Prevention	Forgive	Forget
Political	↑		↑			↑	↑	
Social		↑		↑	↑		↑	
Emotional and Spiritual							↑	↑

A graphic way to see a transition of trauma towards reconciliation is the ‘snail diagram’ (See Figure 2, next page) as it is commonly known, which represents the diagram of the trauma-healing journey.

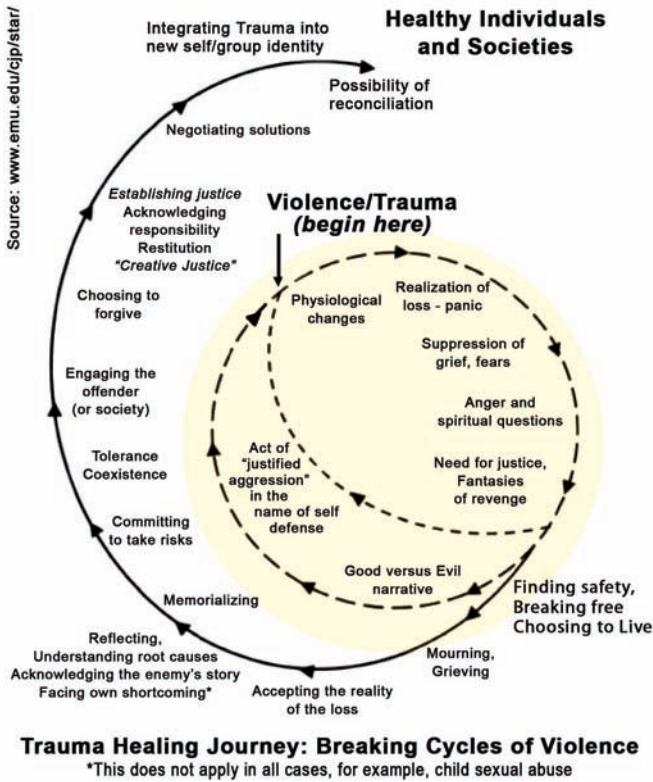
In this diagram breaking the cycle implies carrying out a series of steps: mourning and grieving, accepting the reality of the loss, memorializing, committing to take risk, tolerance, coexistence, engaging the offender (or society), choosing to forgive, establishing ‘creative’ justice, negotiate solutions, integrating trauma experience into new self of group, and finally this may lead to the possibility of reconciliation.

Nevertheless, reconciliation is a journey that encompasses the heart and the mind, and is more than an intellectual exercise, but rather it is a discipline that requires will and internal change (Assefa, 2011). Core elements essential for this process to occur are:

The honest acknowledgment of the harm/injury of the parties involved. Sincere regrets from the parties and remorse for the injury done. Readiness to apologize for one’s role in inflicting the injury, and to “let go” of the anger and bitterness caused to the conflict and compensate the damage caused to the extent possible, entering into a new mutually and entering into a new mutually enriching relationship. (Assefa, p. 1)

However during the experience of trauma there is a reaction of dissociation. This phenomenon helps to protect and buffer the central nervous system from this physiological and emotional hyper[active] arousal. (Fischer, 2011, p. 3) Dissociation mechanisms help to cope with the moment and make the trauma bearable. This is able to take place because of the ‘protection’ of the physical

Figure 2. An adaptation of Olga Botcharova’s(2002) model, which illustrates the Journey from trauma to reconciliation.



area of the brain which holds sensory-physical memories, and is responsible for responding to danger rapidly, processing environmental challenges, and coping with stress and pain. It also manages self-protection responses such as avoidance and escape, while also holding creativity (Schutz 2005, cited in Fischer, 2011, p.5).

From the human linear way of thinking, memories, feelings, and thoughts associated with dissociated fragments do not disappear from the mind, they simply disappear from consciousness. When this happens there is no longer the same degree of connection between the left and right cortices of the brain⁴. Within the broad and multidisciplinary field of trauma studies, scholars

⁴“The left hemisphere controls the functions on the right side of the body. It is also very analytical, and processes in a very logical way, seeing things in sequence. In addition, it is responsible for verbal speech and language, as well as, math and science. The left hemisphere is very linear oriented and houses verbal memories. In contrast, the right hemisphere of the brain sees the bigger picture, it process non-verbal language, such as body language and intonation. (Fischer, 2011, p. 4) The right hemisphere is very visually perceptive, and “specializes in regulating stress and emotion-related processes” (Sullivan & Dufresne, as quoted in Fischer, 2011).

are pointing to the ability of arts and rituals to bridge these hemispheres of the brain with the process of creation. Collective poetry, mural painting, quilting, storytelling, drum groups, improvisation, theatre, performance, dance, etc., can be crafted in a way restore some of the lost interaction and association. These activities change the pattern of thinking and allow a sensual experience, integrating both the sensory and cognitive levels. Furthermore, Assefa (2011) believes that such a capacity might be a vehicle towards reconciliation through a unique form of trauma healing.

Architecture is a category of the fine arts and it is a cultural and political symbol. It was born from the biological need for shelter, and has evolved to a discourse which impacts many aspects of daily life. Today architecture fully acknowledges the way that we set out our spaces can help improve the performance of activities we intend to carry out there. For example, a work space might be designed with a focus on the positioning of light or and/or windows, etc. A cultural and/or social area might make use of colours to provide cultural codes and persuasion. Something as seemingly simple as the setting of the door can determine whether a potential user enters or not, as the appearance and 'feeling' of the structure may relate strongly to cultural, ethnic, social, and even traumatic experiences.

Buildings can also encourage certain actions and behaviours which may be positive or negative. For examples stadiums, hospitals, or banks all encourage particular action throughout their impression on the collective mentality of users. As such the peace museum must be designed to be a public 'stage' which will precipitate positive, peaceful behaviour. However to achieve this constructive result, the setting must be a reflection of the cultural and social conditions found in Cambodia, and truly crafted by the context.

3. Peace architecture

Emma Leslie gave the name to the innovative concept of peace architecture. Peace architecture it is a way of thinking that combines architecture as a practice with the use of a peacebuilding lens to conceptualize and design projects. It acknowledges psychosocial and cultural aspects of the users, learns from vernacular architecture and modern techniques, and creates a physical setting that encourages change, non-violent actions, empowerment, learning and reflection for conflict transformation. Peace architecture is a practice where the physical space created does more good than harm, a concept based in Adam Curle's concept of peace relationships.

In this particular project the peace museum is conceptualized as a dynamic place to educate and initiate the transformation from conflict to positive peace. It is useful to take Boulding's notion of 'imaging the future' – to picture a narrative of 200 years, using the past to explain the present, and using this comprehensive knowledge to project an image of a peaceful future – and reframes it as 'imaging Cambodia's future.' To achieve this, the museum would aim to set a timeline of 100 years before the Khmer Rouge, and 100 years after it.

This would include the stages of current transformation of the country, to learn of the past, visualize the present, and envision the future. Moreover, the ability to tell stories in an open, public domain will encourage participation, and support a new stage in the process of transformation. This museum will offer a safe space for the interaction of victims, perpetrators, and community, the construction of a new peaceful narrative, and the appreciation of the role of arts in healing. Particularly – as mentioned previously – the act of creating bridges the cortices of the brain that have been dissociated by trauma, and therefore the users will become empowered through the discovery of a new method of both individual and collective healing.

The following are five concepts essential to the design of the peace museum:

3.1 The spiral and the orange

This is the main analogy of the design. It merges the trauma-healing diagram (refer to diagram seen above), and the shape of orange peel. The physical shape of the diagram represents the journey from the aim to the real possibility of reconciliation. In addition to this I add the analogy of orange peel to contextualize the design. The green orange is a famous fruit that grows in Battambang, the province in were the museum is planning to be built, and as such is a familiar symbol for the community. (Important to the significance of the peace museum, Battambang was one of the last areas in Cambodia occupied for the Khmer Rouge in the late 90's.) These concepts will be the basis for the main path which traverses through the museum, particularly using a circular design which can unravel but also folds back into itself (refer to trauma diagram for visual representation).

3.2 The opportunity to make choices

The architecture of the museum is such that the setting is one of storytelling. The museum's path will be presented by historical chapters. The first segment

(the circular section) will contain the period preceding the Khmer Rouge. The second one will contain the era of the Khmer Rouge, i.e. rule, recession, and end. Finally, the path starts to unfold until the user encounters an intersection between two directions. Here the user will choose a path: should they choose option 1 they are placed again at the causes of conflict and the conflict itself (i.e. re-join the circle), where they will retrace their steps, reflect and learn again, until they feel ready to emerge from the traumatic cycle; option 2 (where the circle unfolds and continues to the next stage) will lead them through and participate in the process of peacebuilding in Cambodia, and in imagining its future. Finally the rooftop cafe will be a place to reflect and talk, and connect with the outside of the museum and its features.

3.3 Repetition

This concept is somewhat complex. In architecture we repeat elements, sometimes such as an ornament or another object, to create shapes and to provide the building with a particular rhythm – this can help illustrate a sense of unity. For example the Hindu tended to do this to merge the building with their beliefs. They used multiple faces and arms to represent power and wisdom, and to draw the user into a particular spectrum of emotion. This architectural practice has been adapted and applied in Cambodia in a few instances (such as temples, and houses), and demonstrates that there a unique set of characteristics for a Cambodian building which should be utilized. In some ways this physique is a social code, something which has been culturally accepted as deemed as aesthetically pleasing. What has been found is that for Cambodians, a pattern of beauty – like the symmetry of the body – is when an element is repeated twice. I have used this concept in my design in order to control the climatic comfort of the building, and to create a relationship between the inside and outside of it, without completely covering the facades.

3.4 Scale and the ramps

The scale is the perception of how small or big spaces are, and this has an impact in the user's perception and overall experience of the museum. In this design the use of large scale windows and doors will refer to the openness that this building aims to represent. The ramp which will be used to transfer from the conflict cycle to the peace building section represents the aim of transcending to a higher level (i.e. from protracted conflict to positive peace). In this building the aim is to represent how all users can follow the path of peace; it is an empowering path, an inclusive and humanizing walk, and the initiation of a new state of mind.

3.5 Natural elements

Natural elements will surround the design. Particularly the central garden plays an important role in further emphasizing the process of healing and reflecting. Additionally the importance of water in the Cambodian context (a country with a long-standing relationship with water, for example through irrigation systems) has provoked the use of this element to induce a space for reflection, and the internalization of the museum's contents. According to Dr. Assefa, reconciliation includes the relationship between man and nature. The design has sought to take this notion into account, and use it as an additional layer of interaction between the users and the subject of the museum.

4. Conclusion

This paper has attempted to conceptualize the design of a peace museum in Cambodia. It has looked at the complex dynamics which must be accounted for throughout this process, and discussed several more specific issues of the museum's functionality. Although there are certainly boundless factors which will shape the design process this paper has stressed those which it feels constitutes the central concept of the peace museum.

What has been noted is that reconciliation is a process that requires the efforts and contributions of many actors from varying disciplines, and on multiple levels. Although this paper does not claim it is the most important element of reconciliation, architecture has been shown to have considerable value in bringing a dimension of creativity to the traditional peacebuilding mechanisms. Moreover this conceptual proposal is one of the first attempts to develop a physical space through a peacebuilding lens, and as such it challenges both fields of architecture and peacebuilding.

Reflecting on the process, it is clear that the most important element to take into account during the design phase of the building is the perception and the psychological well-being of the users. In addition social and cultural values needed to be respected. To achieve this end – and thus demonstrate that they are in fact cherished – the museum's design must incorporate the history, environment, religions and other beliefs common to Cambodia. Finally, forgiveness is a process that cannot and should not be forced. However, if the people of Cambodia are ready to make use of it, a space such as the peace museum will help instigate the process of transformation, both individually and collectively.

Chapter 4

Bridging the Gaps

The dynamics of cooperation with donor agencies **Notes from an In-Country Support Person (ICSP) in Banda Aceh** *By Marsen B Sinaga*

Although there has been a trend among donor agencies to use the term 'partnership' to refer to their cooperation with recipient organizations, there are many issues involved in the practice of partnership between the two. The rhetoric about partnership sometimes has a different reality in the everyday experience of recipient organizations. While the relation or cooperation between donor agencies and recipient NGOs has been the subject much literature, this dynamic is very often overlooked.

This paper looks at the internal dynamics within two non-governmental organizations (NGOs) who cooperate with donor agencies in the context of post-tsunami and post-conflict Aceh, Indonesia. In particular this discussion is mounted with a focus on the roles (both actual and potential) of an In-Country Support Person (ICSP) who represents a donor agency in the field, in order to work closer with the implementing partner organizations. Using action research methodology with a focus on qualitative data and analysis, this study attempts to shed light on the possible strategic roles of an ICSP in the context of asymmetrical power relation between donor agencies and their recipients NGOs.

In order to achieve this a literature review will first be presented, the role of an ICSP in managing donor-partner relations discussed, and finally key activities of an ICSP necessary to facilitate cooperation will be identified. This study hopes to contribute to the literature on the roles of an ICSP and on how to improve the practice of donor agencies that have an ICSP in the field. Additionally this study has tried to examine these issues through a triangulation between three interrelated elements in the topic. These are: myself as an ICSP since July 2005 in Aceh; Development and Peace (DnP) as the donor agency that employs me as an ICSP, to represent them in the field, and; the two partner organizations in Aceh participating in the study (Kontras Aceh and Jingki Institute).

1. Insights from the literature

Several of the issues discussed in the literature are especially relevant to this study. These are (1) donor agencies and NGOs as multiple realities, (2) unequal power and domination in discourse, (3) ethics of development intervention, and (4) stronger links and shared vision.

Both donor agencies and NGOs are not single realities in themselves. Hancock (1997, p.xiii-xiv) differentiates between official aid organizations and voluntary aid organizations in at least in two aspects. The former usually involves a very large sum of money taken from the tax payers. The tax payers involuntarily contribute to the programs of these official multilateral and bilateral aid organizations, without any say on how the money should be spent. The latter usually manages a smaller amount of money contributed voluntarily by the general public. These organizations are often under scrutiny on how the money they received has been used.

The perspective of multiple realities is also used by Hilhorst (2003) who looked at donor agencies and NGOs as fluid entities. Both may take on several identities and roles. Donor agencies may be

“fundraisers in their own society, or depend on government financing. They may take the role of implementing agency and organize conferences, or give training. They may be membership organizations of churches or social movements, branches of political parties or private firms, and compete with other funding agencies. Some even present themselves in international conferences as representatives of their Southern NGO partners” (Hilhorst, 2003, p. 210).

Hilhorst (2003) argues that these multiple realities are the bottom-line that determines the everyday practice of both donor agencies and NGOs where “their actors balance different domains of work” (Hilhorst, 2003, p. 210).

In a report titled *Leading Edge 2020. Critical Thinking on the Future of International Development*, Trocaire (2011) identifies two types or categories of NGOs, which vary in their roles. One group may become professionalized and large-scale, working to deliver aid effectively in a technical way. These NGOs will have sub-contracts with government or donor agencies, and develop technical expertise needed for particular problems that need to be solved. Another category of NGOs are those that take a critical stance to the hegemonic perspective on development, and chose to form networks for advocacy and to challenge the destructive trends of neoliberal economic model (Trocaire, 2011, p. 59).

Based on the fact that there is always asymmetry between donor agencies as givers and implementing organizations as receivers, Hilhorst (2003) concluded that “the nature of partnership and the roles and discretion of partners involved are always under negotiation, and the way in which the partnership evolves reflects the power processes taking place” (Hilhorst, 2003, p. 211).

Realizing that money is the lifeblood of NGOs, Silliman (1998) observes that the abundant availability of external funds was an important factor in the formation and institutionalization of NGOs following the regime transition in 1986 in the Philippines. The danger is that NGOs with permanent structures often focus their attention to the management of development assistance and follow market-oriented development program, rather than embracing the need to promote and push for more structural change (Silliman, 1998, p. 64-65)

Schuurman (1993) coined the terms “discourse imperialism” to imply another layer in the relationship of predominantly Northern funding NGOs and Southern receiving organizations. Such an apparent system of financial dependency provokes the question of domination and/or imperialism in the discourse between the funding agencies and the recipient organizations. Schuurman defined development NGOs in the North that support organizations in the South as “tireless discourse producers” (Schuurman, 1993, p.203), which bring with them “development fads and related discourses as solutions for the poor in the Third World” (Schuurman, 1993, p.204).

In his article Schuurman (1993) expressed a concern that in order to maintain the financial support from their Northern donor agencies, NGOs in the South often simply followed the discourse on development brought and loved by their donors, with the risk of compromising what is really needed to address the problem faced by the communities where the Southern NGOs worked. Although the author did not go further to suggest a solution for the concern he raised, we can draw out the implied importance of building the bargaining position of Southern NGOs with their Northern donor agencies.

In addition the Northern donor agencies must realize the biases which they project onto their relationships with partners in the South, and examine more closely the actual conditions or problems faced by their Southern partners. The same concern is expressed by Rauh (2010) when she says, “Northern funding agencies need to make substantial systemic changes to ensure that Southern perspective[s] are genuinely incorporate[d] into the programs that they fund” (Rauh, 2010, p.40). While not addressing the issue directly, by touching on the above concerns Schuurman (1993) and Rauh (2010) enable us to further

explore the role of an ICSP as the agent who represents the donor agencies in the field.

The topic of how development aid can effectively improve the lives of the poor remains one of the most active and relevant disputes in the discourse (Slater, 1993; Hancock, 1997). What this paper has chosen to extract from these discussions is that development practice should be, by its nature, bound by an ethical or normative principle that contributes to the empowerment of the poor and their living conditions. In addition Gibson, Andersson, Ostrom & Shivakumar (2009, p. 232) highlighted that to achieve ownership and sustainability of any development intervention, issues like participation of target group(s) and knowledge about the problems faced by them are extremely important to consider and include in the project design.

Racelis (2007) examined an initiative to rectify dependency relationships between donors and recipient NGOs in the Philippines, named the Philippine-Miserior Partnership (PMP). This initiative was proposed by Miserior as part of their effort to re-examine the donor-recipient relations in the 1990s. The idea is to explore “new and more egalitarian modes of relating to one another. The proposal also traced its roots to the long-standing and broader NGO-donor debate on equity and trust in that relationship”. (Racelis, 2007, p. 208).

In this new mode of partnership, decision-making process takes place in a close consultation in a local consortium between Miserior field staff and leaders of Philippines’ NGOs that meet regularly. Racelis observed that “the significance of the long consultative process for developing locally generated priorities and egalitarian relationships lies in the building of trust, not only between donor and NGOs, but within the NGOs communities themselves”. (Racelis, 2007, p.210). Assessing this partnership, Racelis (2007, p. 211) said,

“The PMP has thus succeeded in transforming an initially unequal donor-recipient relationship into a genuine Global Partnership. Flexibility, regular interaction, on-the-ground knowledge, and mutual respect form the basis of this impressive new relationship”.

The success of PMP, as observed by Racelis (2007), is one of the examples where a donor agency took the initiative to be closer to its partners as part of its efforts to build a better partnership. This example could be a point of departure in discussing and determining the role and principles of an ICSP representing a donor agency in the field.

2. Findings

To shed light on the possible strategic roles of an ICSP in the context of an asymmetrical power relationship (between a donor and its partners) the following discussion will look at various perceptions of the role of an ICSP which I have encountered. Subsequently the paper will draw out several activities of an ICSP which are vital to managing tensions in the donor-partner relationship.

2.1 The Donor perspective

Through conducting this action research project – and calling upon my own experience as an ICSP with DnP – I have understood two donor-defined motivations for having an ICSP in the field. The first is to have more presence on the ground in the context of increased demand of accountability and to demonstrate concrete results of the program it supported. It is important not to forget that donors (such as DnP) need have a responsibility to be accountable to their own sources of funding.

The second reason is the realization that the role of a donor should not simply be transferring funds but also showing concrete solidarity to its partners in their work and struggle. For example DnP feels the need “to create a worldwide movement for change” (Agustin, email correspondence, 2011). This dual role may be seen as a source of tension however one DnP staff member perceived the dichotomy as artificial and that both roles are not mutually exclusive. Instead, it can be perceived as a creative tension that is not problematic but constructive (Agustin, email correspondence, 2011).

At this juncture it should be noted that the donor agencies’ perceptions of the recipient organizations strongly affect how the role of an ICSP is defined. For instance, donor agencies that relate to their recipient organizations as sub-contractors (i.e. procured through a bidding process) and donor agencies that perceive their recipient organizations as partners (i.e. an implementing agency who has a better understanding of the local context) will define substantially different roles for an ICSP. Although these are very context specific, what can be said confidently is that the second type of donor is generally more open and flexible in incorporating the analysis and ideas of their Southern partner organizations into the program framework. This type of donor is more likely to care about building a shared vision of the social transformation they want to achieve with the partner.

2.2 The partners’ perspectives

However it is important not only to consider how the donor defines the role of the ICSP but also to account for the perspective of the other parties in the relationship, namely the partners. When questioned about the roles of an ICSP in FGDs, both partners expressed several normative ideas and expectations. These are illustrated in the table below.

Table 1: Perception of partners about the role and best practices of an ICSP

No	Roles of and benefit of an ICSP	Best Practices
1	Bridge the communication between a donor agency and its partners	Frequent visit and encounters
2	Facilitate the process of building shared vision	Informal discussion/approaches
3	Frequent direct interaction	Willingness to listen and to learn
4	Easier communication	Appreciative of experiences from the field
5	Improved mutual understanding and trust	Participate in the work and learning process of partner organizations.

(Source: Summarized from the FGDs)

These perceptions share several insights into the understood role of an ICSP. First, the presense of an ICSP who represents a donor agency in the field will make the communication between a donor and its partners easier. The direct interaction and communication which takes place are believed to improve mutual understanding between the two in the partnership.

Second, by bridging the gap in communication an ICSP will help both the donor and partners to understand each other’s situation more clearly. For example the reality and challenges faced by the donor agency will be passed on to the partners, while at the same time the donor agency will receive updated information about the changing local context faced by the partners in their work.

Finally, the partners also recognized the role of the ICSP in facilitating a shared vision about the world that both the donor agency and its partner organizations want to pursue.

2.3 Building trust

Despite the usage of the term ‘partnership’ to the relationship of donor agencies and recipient NGOs, the bottom-line is that donor agencies have more power through their ability to start, continue, or stop the interaction. Based on this asymmetry, and also because the ICSP is often an outsider to the partners in the areas of cultural and religious background, the building of trust should be a top priority. Essentially this should aim to combat several sources of tension in the donor-partner relationship.

Looking to my own experience as an ICSP I have applied this process of trust building to four important aspects of my relation to partner organizations. First is the problem of accountability. My belief is that partners first and foremost should be accountable to their vision and mission, their *raison d’être* as organizations. When an organization claims to work for the good of vulnerable groups it should also ensure regular monitoring and evaluation mechanisms which test whether the interventions are genuinely in-line with their justifications – i.e. judge the legitimacy of their approach using their own values as indicators. This level of self-scrutiny will make the communication and partnership with donors positive rather than artificial.

The second aspect relates to the way partners perceive proposals and reports. There is a tendency among the partners to see proposals, and especially reports, as a burden imposed by outside. In my interaction with partners I have tried to encourage partners to have a different way of seeing it. As claim-bearing organizations that have a clear mission and mandate, developing a good program plan and conducting regular internal evaluation should be considered necessary, if not a must, by partners. If partners produce proposal and reports only to meet donor requirements and for the sake of getting or keeping the money flowing in, then there is the tendency of cheating. Consequently, proposals and reports never reflect the true condition of the partners or the communities they claim to support. Obviously in this situation the donor-partner relationship would not be categorized as healthy or trusting.

Third aspect of building trust with partners is the importance of extensive involvement in the endeavours and struggles of partners. I have tried to show the need to go beyond a funding relationship into a genuine partnership for social change. Fund availability from donors is mostly short term, unstable, and disruptive, and thus money should not be the main foundation of the partnership. It is only through the level of commitment and expression of

solidarity which has been discussed in previous paragraphs that the dream for a meaningful social change can be realized.

The fourth aspect is about treating each partner according to their specificity and uniqueness, and also trying to make friends with all the staffs in each partner organization instead of only interacting with the elite, or the leadership. This concept ties into the larger principal which should be understood by ICSPs, that is partner organizations on the whole should not be taken as a single reality but as organizations with multiple realities created by carrying out their work in many, varying domains (Hilhorst, 2003).

While the four aspects of trust building above are from my own personal experiences in Aceh, they are extremely important when considering the role of any ICSP position. Trust is the central bond between the donor and partners, and shapes every other element of their working relationship. Moreover in the face of an asymmetric power relation the element of trust becomes even more important. It can help ensure a civil relationship or even be used as a mechanism for preventing the domination of partner organizations by donors. Overall it is because of these important effects that trust-building is a central, strategic role of an ICSP.

2.4 Finding space for creativity

Although building trust is an important responsibility, the roles of an ICSP are not one-fit-for-all. How the roles are formulated, monitored and evaluated are determined primarily by the type and nature of the donor agencies involved in the partnership.

Regardless of the organizational differences between donor agencies, ICSP positions are not often subject to strict and/or everyday monitoring and this is important as it provides room for manoeuvre in their encounters with the implementing organizations. Under these circumstances the ICSP enjoys flexibility and space for creativity, and this is where the individual can truly act on their desire to make a substantial impact – they can build not only a positive relationship between the donor and partner, but also help to ensure the development interventions are more effective and sustainable. This requires, however, a personal dedication from the ICSP, perhaps stemming from their own direct experiences with conditions of stark poverty or other social injustices.

3. Conclusion

This paper has attempted to shed light on the possible strategic roles of an ICSP in the context of asymmetrical power relations between donor agencies and recipient NGOs. Particularly this paper has discussed the role of an ICSP in donor-partner relations through the perspectives of the individual stakeholders, and subsequently identified several key activities essential to facilitating cooperation between donors and partners. Overall, after examining the roles and responsibility of an ICSP in managing donor-partner relations we can stress that ICSPs are essential to ensure a productive system of cooperation.

One of the more important lessons which can be drawn out from this action research is that there are always tensions inherent in the roles of an ICSP, especially in the context of asymmetrical power between donor agencies and their recipient Southern partners. Southern NGO partners are unlikely to be instantly convinced that the presence of an ICSP is to truly accompany and to be of help for them in their work and struggle for social change. In fact there are often accusations about a donor-driven or donor-directed program where, intentionally or unintentionally donor agencies impose discourse and ideas onto their partner organizations. In such a situation the level of cooperation is weak, and therefore sustainability of outcomes endangered.

However we have seen that trust building can be used to change this perspective, through taking time to build a mutual understanding between the parties. Although the process is time consuming, creating an open and sincere channel of communication between an ICSP and the partner organizations is possible and extremely beneficial. An ICSP can present him/herself as proof of the donor agency's commitment to listen to, and better understand, the realities and challenges faced by partner organizations in the field. Through his/her intensive presence on the ground, an ICSP has the potential to be the most relevant source of information and affect whether the donor agency can contribute meaningfully to real change.

At the same time partner organizations also need to understand the reality of, and the challenges faced by, a donor agency back in its home country. It is often forgotten that a donor also has a responsibility to be accountable to its contributors, and this is in fact fundamental to its existence. Without the support and cooperation from its partner organizations (e.g. through deliverables such as reports on fund usage and on project results) the donor-partner relationship cannot bring about meaningful and sustainable change.

Embedding feedback mechanisms

Bringing voices from the ground to the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) – Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) peace talks

By Elizabeth M. Padilla

A lot has been written and said about the conflict in Mindanao. Most major conflicts today are hybrid struggles that spill across the international, state, and societal levels. This is what makes them so hard to resolve or transform.

The island of Mindanao in the southern Philippines has experienced protracted and intractable conflict over the last four decades. Mindanao is the home of three groups of people, namely, Bangsamoro or Muslims, the Lumad or indigenous people, and the ‘majority’ Christian settlers—the descendants of twentieth century settlers who came from the northern and central Philippines. On the other hand a number of armed revolutionary groups are also found in Mindanao: the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), founded in 1969; the Philippines-wide Communist Party of the Philippines–New People’s Army (CPP/NPA); the Rebolusyonaryong Partidong Manggagawa–Mindanao (RPMM), a breakaway group from the CPP/NPA; and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), which split from the MNLF in 1977. All these groups have fought for more than four decades against oppression, for nationalism, identity, and the right to self-determination (RSD). These struggles have caused violence from all sides, and to-date have accounted for thousands of lost lives. The intermittent conflict has destroyed infrastructure, displaced populations, deferred development, and engendered mistrust within and between communities (World Bank, 2006: p.5).

Indeed, all conflicts are complex, deep-rooted, multi-faceted, and very challenging to resolve. Unfortunately the conflict in Mindanao is no exception. There is not a single formula, method, or prescription for a comprehensive and extensive framework of peace negotiations. Good settlements should not only bridge the conflicting parties’ interests but also represent and reflect the sentiments, issues, concerns, and dreams of the bigger and wider community in which the conflict is situated. This is a situation where an on-going peace process is taking place, yet pervasive conflict is recurring, and people and community always bear the brunt whatever the results of the negotiations.

Hence, this study was conducted with the aim of understanding how to develop and integrate feedback mechanisms, those which may carry the voice of the people on the ground to the peace process. In particular it is hoped that such mechanisms

will be able to bring issues, concerns, dreams, and aspirations of the communities affected by conflicts to the negotiating parties engaged in the GPH-MILF peace process. Furthermore, this study was based on the assumption that feedback mechanisms, if guaranteed to happen in an enabling and facilitating environment, can be a process of building the relationships and sense of trust necessary to build peace and transform conflict.

1. Methods of the study

The research design employed methods of participatory action research (PAR), and as such underwent three research cycles. These involved SALAM's staff and Board of Trustees (BOT), the selected community residents (specifically those victims of the attack in 2008) residing in Brgy. Tacub, Kauswagan, Lanao del Norte, and the peace panel of the MILF. Data was generated through focus group discussions, meeting and sharing of information with key informants, and through a forum which was conducted to clarify questions and issues. Research journal writing has been part of the whole process wherein reflections and lessons from each of the cycles were recorded, and included in this report.

The generated data, information, and observations were then grouped and classified according to themes in order to see patterns and relationships which were relevant to answer the following research questions: 1) How do I (the researcher) facilitate the process of learning in order to generate views, opinions, and ideas of developing and integrating feedback mechanism within the organization?; and 2) What are the conditions which must be created to generate effective feedback mechanisms within the context of the GPH-MILF peace process?

It is also important to note that this study has identified several limitations. These are: 1) the study was confined to a community dominantly inhabited by Christian migrant settlers who were victims of the conflict, thus views from other groups of people, e.g. Lumad and Bangsamoro, as well as views from the other sectors were not reflected in the paper; 2) participation and interaction of the peace panel from the government side was not reflected in the paper because of a lack of contact, despite the efforts to reach them; 3) there was no follow through activity and no further discussion with the MILF panel within the duration of the study.

2. Context of the study

Lanao del Norte is one of the provinces in Mindanao that is not spared of conflict. In fact, intractable conflict dates back to the 1970's where conflict can be attributed to the ferocious and bloody violence between two paramilitary forces, the 'Ilaga'⁵ and 'Barracuda'⁶. Both are considered private armies and somewhat associated with fanatical practices; the 'Ilaga' with Christian fundamentalism and the 'Barracuda' with Muslim extremism. During this period both forces experienced significant backing by local political warlords which added to the strength of each group. Although they had been significantly weakened for a period, their revival was felt around the conflict-affected communities during the 2008 armed conflict, and today traces of these groups are still found in Lanao del Norte and other conflict-affected areas in Mindanao.

The GRP-MILF peace process began in 1997, during the administration of President Fidel Ramos, and a year after the forging of the 1996 agreement with the MNLF. However, the process failed to gain momentum and a series of events in March 2000 ultimately made the government adopt an all-out war policy against the MILF. On March 16, the MILF forces occupied the town hall of Kauswagan, Lanao del Norte. Stung by this daring display of force the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) fought the MILF, and the ensuing battle paralyzed transportation and economic activities in this part of Mindanao (Gaspar, Lapad, & Maravillas, 2002: p.112). The residents in these villages were forced to flee and seek refuge in neighbouring towns. There was an escalation of violent acts and threats to the lives and security of civilians in this part of the region in particular, and in Southern Mindanao in general. Having declared an 'all-out-war' and seen the conflict inflict great damage President Estrada subsequently bowed out of office. Nonetheless the conflict continued, eventually leading to the total military occupation of Camp Abubakar⁷.

After the ouster of President Estrada in 2001, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo re-established the peace process with the MILF. Thus began the 2001 Tripoli Agreement on peace, laying the framework for the peace talks between the Philippine Government and the MILF. These talks covered the areas of security, rehabilitation and development, and ancestral domain.

⁵ "Ilaga", a Visayan term for rat, is a vigilante group organized by the Christian politicians and the military. Known to be ferociously anti-Moro.

⁶ "Barracuda" is a kind of big fish and the Moro counterpart of the "Ilaga" vigilante group. Organized and backed up by Moro politicians and warlords.

⁷ Camp Abubakar was the major and sophisticated camp of the MILF situated in the town of Barira, Lanao del Sur. It was named after Abubakar, the first successor of Prophet Muhammad. It was not only a camp, but was made into a model of a society that the MILF wanted to establish for the people. It occupied an area of 10,000 hectares, but its control extended to an area of approximately 100 square kilometers.

In 2003, an agreement on security issues between the GPH and MILF was reached, a Cessation of Hostilities agreement was forged, and ceasefire mechanisms put in place. In 2005, an agreement on rehabilitation and development issues was reached, and the Bangsamoro Development Agency (BDA) was established to begin donor assisted projects while a final agreement continued to be negotiated. Throughout this entire period, starting with the new GPH-MILF peace process, efforts were made to forge ahead on the third and most difficult aspect of this peace process: ancestral domain. However, as is apparent, this has proven to be the most difficult and elusive issue and remains to be both a direct and indirect conflict issue.

2.1 The 2008 MILF attack

The Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD)⁸ is a document of understanding between the MILF and the GPH. It took eleven years in the making to craft this blueprint. It was on August 5, 2008 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia that this was supposedly signed between the two negotiating parties. However moments before the signing ceremony, the Philippine Supreme Court issued a Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) based on petitions by some Local Government officials in Mindanao, including national legislators from the Philippine Senate. The MOA-AD, and its drafting process, was later declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court.

Even before the rumoured signing of the MOA-AD, the agreement had already been dismissed by various dissenting groups (especially the Mindanao settlers), and demonstrations were staged in various places in Mindanao to air out these opposing views. This led to a rampage by three MILF commanders across predominantly Christian areas in Northern and Central Mindanao, and the fighting caused the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people.

All of these resulted in over a year of impasse in the formal talks (from August 2008 to December 2009) and the pull-out of Malaysia from the International Monitoring Team. Though the attack concentrated on three barangays, the terror permeated around the neighbouring municipalities and towns. Tens of thousands of people had evacuated because of panic and fear and violence shrouded the whole province.

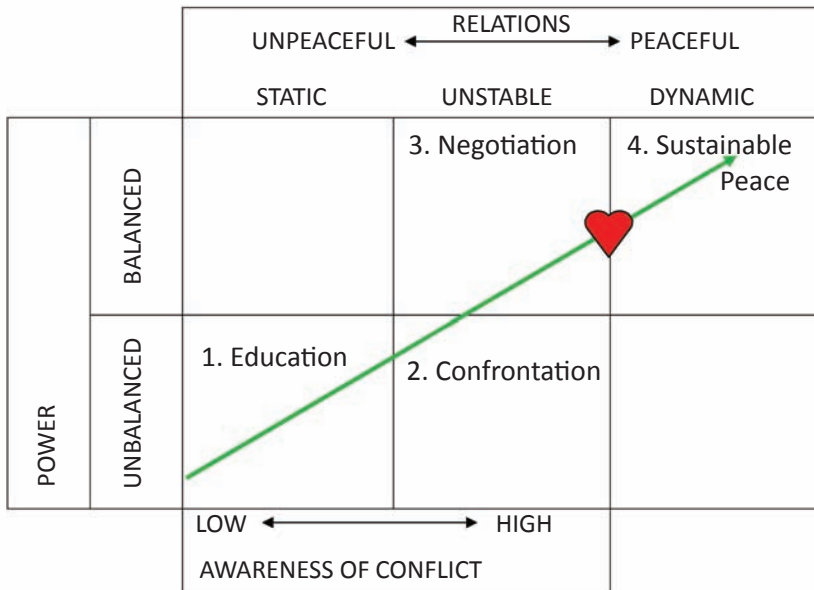
⁸ This Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) is a document of understanding between the MILF and the GRP that consists of statements agreed upon by consensus between the peace panels of both parties. It deals with Concepts and Principles, Territory, Resources, Governance of the Ancestral Domain of the Bangsamoro. This MOA is not the final peace agreement between the GPH and MILF but is a crucial step towards the formal talks and the final peace accord.

This situation called for Local Government Units (LGUs), government agencies, NGOs, and various humanitarian organizations to carry out a series of relief operations to the affected communities. My organization, SALAM, is one of the organizations that responded to the situation.

2.2 The current situation of the peace process

Following the issuance of the TRO by the Supreme Court in 2008, both negotiating parties have reconstructed their respective negotiating approaches. In the last months of last year the MILF has drafted its own version of Peace Agreement, dubbed the Comprehensive Compact,⁹ which was made public in the beginning of January 2010. On 27-28 January 2010 talks took place and, as planned, the parties exchanged draft text proposals for a mutually agreed upon Comprehensive Compact. However, the talks collapsed over wide differences in each party’s text, and although the peace process is now settling into a degree of stability, the situation is so fragile that anything could still happen. To better reflect the situation, we can refer to the diagram below.

Figure 1: Progression of Conflict



Adapted from: Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, & Miall (2005)

⁹ Comprehensive Compact is the proposal of the MILF to the GPH in lieu of the MOA-AD, the original peace agreement that was scrapped in 2008. The draft proposal consisted at least 90% of the original contents of the MOA-AD.

The situation of Mindanao can be considered in between the square three (negotiation) and square four (sustainable peace). Hence, the heart between these two squares is given to denote the situation. Still negotiations are on-going between the MILF and the Government, and several highlights can be seen from this process of moving towards sustainable peace. These are: the reconstitution of both panels with the inclusion of representatives of an Indigenous People from the MILF side; the re-establishment of the International Monitoring Team (IMT), expanded to include Japan and an additional civilian protection component, to be run by international and local NGOs; the creation of International Contact Group (ICG) which underscored the representation of NGOs; and so on. Additionally a trend in the transparency of the peace process is now happening like never before, whereas previously there was much concealment. A series of discussions and consultations are also happening over the Comprehensive Compact, where everyone can freely critique and make suggestions to enhance the document.

Just before the end of President Arroyo's term, the Government peace panel and the MILF panel declared that they had reached consensus on an Interim Agreement, with a view of moving towards the Comprehensive Compact through continued negotiations. The Parties considered new formulas that permanently respond to the legitimate aspirations of the Bangsamoro people, building on prior points of consensus reached; considering new modalities to end the armed hostilities; reframing the consensus points on Ancestral Domain, and; incorporating in the Compact agreed cessation of hostilities and security arrangements, and development and rehabilitation initiatives.

3. Relevant theories

The study made use of theories and concepts that have significant relevance for the findings discussed in the following section. The Theory of Change according to Shapiro (2005) looks into the causal processes through which change results from programmatic strategies and actions. It attempts to understand how practitioners believe individual, intergroup, and social or systemic change happens. The Theory of Change also specifies short-term, intermediate, and long-term goals, and outlines their intended direct effects on change at the individual, relational, and structural levels (Shapiro, 2005). This runs parallel to SALAM's core principle, to develop innovative programs and approaches which help resolve conflicts, prevent violence, and promote more cooperative relationships between groups. The community-driven development interventions that SALAM is implementing in these conflict-affected communities can be considered the starting point to initiate such

change. Instigating change can be targeted through many approaches, all of which depend on the conflict context, and all of which are in reality very difficult to achieve. At the core of this issue is that the structural and systemic problems are often the main causes of protracted and intractable conflicts.

Indeed, any set of institutions and social relationships that deny the identity, social recognition, autonomy, or preconditions for human development definitely creates an environment of conflict. Maiese (2003) postulates that structural conflict is likely to result whenever patterned social relationships fail to satisfy basic needs, or secure vital human interests. Accordingly the struggle for RSD of the MILF is a struggle for Bangsamoro's identity and security, both as a people and a state.

According to Burton (1990) the quest to satisfy needs is the basic drive for human motivations and behavior. They will be pursued by all available means, often seemingly "irrationally," and against all odds – a fertile concept for the prevalence of conflict. Hence, the decision and issuance of the TRO by the Supreme Court as discussed above signified the failure to meet such needs, and apparently led to frustration severe enough for some members of the MILF to launch further attacks.

Just as conflict transformation and peace building are understood in terms of systems of change, Diamond and McDonald (1996) conceived the multi-track diplomacy approach to understand the nature of peace building, where no one track is more important than the others, nor independent from them. This model is also referred to as a systems approach. One of its categories is social peace building, which suggests that approaching peace through a human element, within the framework of violence prevention, is possible (for example by supporting community leaders with skills, tools, and capacity to prevent violence and escalation of violence).

Encarnacion, et. al. (in Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, & Miall, 2005) discuss models of third party intervention, and stress how the role of external parties may come to be essential. As their level of involvement increases they thereby become an 'embedded party' who plays a key role in expediting moves towards conflict resolution. In this context SALAM considered itself as an insider and 'embedded' within the conflict system. It has been building capacities of the people and community, and undertaking psychosocial interventions which will try to work across various levels – from grassroots up to the top ranking negotiators.

The communication for social change model describes how social change can happen. Through it, it is suggested that the welfare of communities as a whole will be positively affected (Figueroa, Kincaid, Manju, & Lewis, 2002). The model describes a dynamic, iterative process that starts with a 'catalyst/stimulus' that can be external or internal to the community. This catalyst leads to dialogue within the community that, when effective, leads to collective action, and the resolution of a common problem. Working within this context, my organization's initiative in drawing out issues and feeding – back to the appropriate negotiating party serves as an impetus, a catalyst, or stimulus. It is an action which helps to change the mind set and relationship existing vis-à-vis SALAM and the community, as well as creating changes in the perceptions, views, and deepens the appreciation and understanding of differing cultures – for example Bangsamoro and the majority Christian settlers.

4. Findings

Based on all the actions and reflections, a number of insights and lessons were drawn out. These findings were then understood with the help of the theories presented above.

Within my organization a common understanding was reached and the mechanism which enabled SALAM to engage in the process of change was clear – without a doubt, this situation is truly reflective to Shapiro's (2005) theory of change. Accordingly the process taking place now, along with development interventions in the communities, is a normal process evolving from an organization that is dynamic and adaptive. The intervention strategies employed by SALAM in this specific community indeed aimed to effect change. This also ran parallel at the community level, wherein the community realized and understood their role and stake in the peace process. Peace processes that are grounded on the spirit of collective dialogue, (Figueroa, Kincaid, Manju, & Lewis, 2002) inclusiveness, and participation definitely paved way in the settlement and resolution of the conflict.

Constructive communication was also found to be significant in striving to achieve change. The process of exchanging views, ideas and opinions between and among the staff, colleagues, and the community made the communication more facilitative. Equally important was to regard this as both a symbolic and practical expression of respect, whose goal is to build an understanding of the nature of needs (Francis, 2000). Moreover, this requires emphatic listening focused on the needs and perceptions of the different parties involved.

Enabling and facilitating an appropriate environment is an essential aspect for a substantial and meaningful exchange of views, as well as to articulate issues and concerns. Providing the space for survivors of violence to be felt, heard, and to take into account their social and cultural needs paved way for healing and rebuilding relationships. This is a paramount consideration for people who have experienced traumatic and tragic events. SALAM's presence in the community enabled the establishment of a positive relationship and rapport among the people and the community.

My previous work with another organization provided me with the opportunity to be very familiar with the community, such that mutual trust and openness has been afforded to me and was essential in building and sustaining this level of relationship. However, this atmosphere was not felt during the consultation with that of the MILF panel. Seemingly, a limited space was provided and it was apparent that there was a distant relationship with MILF. As Maiese (2003) said the aim of dialogue is to listen, hear, and develop a shared understanding of the issues that are articulated by the people themselves. This however was not felt during the consultation with MILF.

The friendly environment and facilitating space provided by SALAM to the people in the community built their confidence to open up issues, and pour out their feelings. These gestures indicated that this opportunity was a great relief for them. In this context SALAM is trying to bridge the gaps and to connect the community by articulating their issues and concerns. This kind of situation was absent before, and therefore inclusiveness and peoples participation was not present at all until the MOA-AD was scrapped. As elaborated by Diamond and McDonald's (1996) Multi-track Diplomacy Model, a systems approach where social peace building through the human element is extremely important.

SALAM's interventions and initiatives employed in this conflict-affected community were small compared to the magnitude of the conflict situation which needs to be addressed. However, as Figueroa, Kincaid, Manju, & Lewis (2002) said, a 'catalyst or stimulus' can start to initiate actions both in the community and outside of the community. SALAM has embraced this approach, focusing on the community and the MILF peace panel, which will lead to collective action and resolution of a common problem within a given time frame.

5. Conclusion and recommendation

Change is pervasive in our life and no matter how great or small it affects us all. As such it is important to understand the context where change is taking place, since this would impact the various levels of oneself – personal, relational and social. Undoubtedly, it was the appalling situation in the area that compelled SALAM to take up the challenge, to change the predicament of the ‘ordinary people’ who have been confronted with conflict and violence. Indeed, in the process of integrating the desired change, some factors were illuminated that led to realize the objectives of this study.

Constructive communication is essential in the process of effecting change, while dissenting opinions and disagreements also maybe a common phenomenon in the process. Social change requires a model of communication that is cyclical, relational, and one that leads to an outcome of mutual change rather than one sided, individual change. It should be understood by everybody that such change will be carried out collectively, and towards a common, desired direction. This is one of the essential elements to determine whether positive feedback is afforded to the ones who adhere for change. Moreover, SALAM has been a catalyst/stimulus for basic and simple initiatives that lead the dialogue in the community, that when effective in turn leads to collective action, and the resolution of common problems.

It is also apparent that mutual trust is as significant as building relationships and providing space for exchanging views. The relational aspects of the process are central to understanding of perceived, open, and honest communication as a true encounter between equals. In other words, SALAM has established a level of relationship in the community which has without a doubt afforded mutual trust, respect, honesty, and sincerity.

It is truly liberating when one can articulate and freely express needs, aspirations, and issues – especially those issues which have been a concern since before the negotiations. This is what was felt in the community when the victims can freely describe what they felt in an open manner, and thus were able to put forward their questions. However, the environment doesn’t warrant a truly sensible and prudent exchange since it was not within the genuine essence of dialogue. Moreover, the arbitrariness of the activity was also of paramount consideration.

Organizationally SALAM had rightfully acknowledged its limitations and constraints. Challenged by the changes unfolding within its working

environment, the organization thought that this is the perfect time to develop its niche in the field of peace building. Indeed this demonstrates a process of constant evolution within the operations of the organization, while at the same time shows how it is able to respond creatively to the immediate needs of the community (for example through SALAM's CDD project).

In the light of the apparent easing of tensions, it can be confidently stated that SALAM has done its part and will continue to do its part in this area. It strives to journey together with the conflict-ridden people and communities, mindful of the changing realities, and continuing to contribute to collective efforts to uphold human decency in whatever sphere.

6. Recommendations

The following are the recommendations that were not covered within the scope of this research study:

1. Conduct a similar study or another study that will look into the participation and engagement of the peace panel from the government side.
2. Create more spaces and opportunities for SALAM to engage with the MILF and government panel, so as to strengthen and enhance the mechanisms that have been established.
3. Conduct similar study with other sectors and groups of people e.g. Lumad, Bangsamoro, religious, academe, etc., so as to draw their opinions and views related to the issue.

The Good Wednesday Group for Peace Propagating collaboration between civil society groups and the 6th Infantry Division in Maguindanao

By Leonardo H. Bautista

Maguindanao province is one of the actual violent affected areas (AVATAR) in Mindanao. This province, located in Central Mindanao, is part of the Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao. The armed conflict between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) has continued for years, affecting thousands of civilians in the area. The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the civil society groups have also been in constant friction because of the history of injustices, human rights violation, and biases brought by years of armed confrontations and operations.

The MILF split from its original group, the Moro National Liberation Front, who signed a peace agreement with the government in 1996. At present the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) has resumed peace talks with MILF, and the group has been continuing to list self-determination and self-autonomy as its main objectives. As of this year the peace process with the MILF has resumed following a halt in discussions in 2008. At present the whole country is very optimistic and hopeful for the political peace process to succeed.

With armed conflict frequenting Mindanao since the 1960s, the state has continuously utilized the AFP to counter insurgency (technically under the jurisdiction of the local police). Ever since the martial law period the military has been in the forefront of implementing the state policies. Now, even with civilian presidents having succeeded martial law and claiming to have restored democracy, the policies to resolve the armed conflict continue to favour armed operations over economic, political, and structural reforms. In sum the government still falls short of solving the root problems of the violent confrontation.

In Mindanao alone the PA has 4 infantry divisions consisting of 46 battalions, 640 officers, 22,072 enlisted personnel, and 32,593 armed volunteers of the Civilian Armed Forces Geographic Unit (CAFGU) – this is in addition to other combat ready units in the area (Balay Mindanaw Foundation, Inc., 2009). To show the scale of this mobilization, a small province like Maguindanao has attracted 6 battalions of troops plus combat support units under the banner of the 6th Infantry Division (ID). This is so far the one of the largest ground troop forces deployed in an area in the Philippines.

The Maguindanao Massacre which happened on November 23, 2009 has further intensified grievances and put pressure on the government, especially the military. This murder of more than 50 people instigated a wider debate over the military's link to local politics, human rights violations, and the irresponsible use of military resources and operations throughout the years in Maguindanao. The creation of such mistrust between civil society and armed forces has made the prospect of civil military relations and collaborations very difficult, even though this is a needed relationship in post-conflict settings.

As it stands, existing knowledge of Civil Military Relations (CMR) is very limited to counter-insurgency strategies and does not target specifically the building of relationships. Charlito Manlupig (2008), Diana Francis (2010), and Howard Clark (2005) share similar thoughts about how the state forces and civil society could collaborate and transform each other in the process. All of this literature points out that, although perhaps rare, by partnering with civil society, and going beyond their mandate, the military can become peacebuilders.

This paper is very significant both for my institution and me, particularly as the initiative of the Good Wednesday Group for Peace (GWGP) is a new and unique experience. Secondly we have been engaging with the state forces since 2006, and collectively the GWGP initiative has set a new model to be applied in an AVATAR like Maguindanao. The experience holds important lessons-learned to share with stakeholders in similar situations from other locations. Moreover the military is now undergoing a paradigm shift under the leadership of President Aquino. This new direction appears to be placing more emphasis on multi-stakeholdership, and the use of a whole-nation approach (reflected in their recently developed Internal Peace and Security Plan [IPSP]).

Research Problem

One of the present concerns of the GWGP is how the group will move on and be effective considering the change of leaderships in the 6th ID's Civil Military Operations (CMO), which serves as the military unit that directly relates with the civilians. This is one of the realities that they are facing, as well as sincerity on the part of the military to continue the engagement with the civil society.

Research Goal

This action research aims to identify factors that strengthen, sustain, limit, and develop the mechanism between the 6th ID and the local Civil Society Groups (CSGs) to collaborate through the GWGP in the province of Maguindanao.

Research Design

My action research was founded on the research cycle of action of analysis, planning, action, reflection, using three cycles that was conducted from April to June, 2011. The overall design of my action research adapted the descriptive research technique and used primarily qualitative methods of data gathering. This cycle captured the thoughts, experiences, perceptions and actual stories of members of GWGP in relating to, and doing work with, each other. This has provided concrete accounts of the limitations, initiatives, and breakthroughs that the GWGP has discovered.

The action research focused on four layers of attention. First is myself as both a peace worker and member of the GWGP. I was involved in the formation and facilitation of the group's establishment, and I see its importance to assess my involvement and commitment as a peace worker. The second layer is the institution where I am working, the Balay Mindanao Foundation, Inc. (BMFI). My institution is instrumental in bridging the civil society and military in the period following the Maguindanao Massacre. Third is the involved military actors, particularly the 6th Infantry Division which serves as the secretariat of the group. Following the Maguindanao Massacre many elements in the present military units have been replaced. The final layer is the civil society groups operating in Maguindanao Area (see diagram).

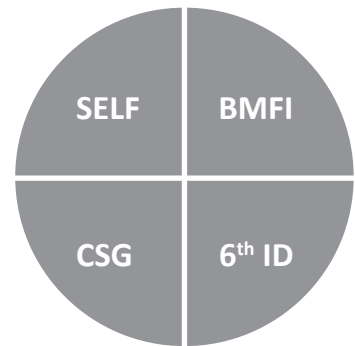


Diagram 1: Levels of attention of Action Research

1. Good Wednesday Group for Peace (GWGP)

The group began as a simple gathering after the Maguindanao Massacre, and was officially established on March 16, 2010. Since this date it has crucial in regularly bringing together a number of CSGs working in Maguindanao and the 6th ID. It has a loose and informal structure, and meets on Wednesdays. The leadership is shared between the CSGs and the military, and they have one common interest – their passion for peace in Maguindanao.

The gathering was initiated and organized by the 6th ID through the CMO, led by former CMO commander Lt. Col. BenjieHao. The Balay Mindanaw Foundation, Inc. (BMFI) facilitated the relationship between these elements and the CSGs. The immediate objective of the military was to make the stakeholders understand their position, and to clarify their intent with the



GWGP Gathering

newly-installed troops in the area (Democracy, 2011). This is the first time that the 6th ID, through the CMO, is open to engage the CSGs in a dialogue.

The group collectively agreed that they will not have any elected officers. It is a voluntary and open venue for everyone to participate. During gatherings, military are in civilian uniforms to show respect and to remove the barrier which men in uniform present. Stakeholders sit in a round formation, with no arrangement according to ranks or stature.

Unintentionally, since the first gathering on March 16, 2010 (which happened to be a Wednesday) the group has now moved on to the level of addressing other conflict issues in the geographical area. This includes the need for conflict mapping and analysis need to be carried out, for the CSGs to become greatly involved in the local resolution of conflicts, and the army and the police to collaborate and support the process.

2. Findings and Discussion

2.1 Change of perceptions

The GWGP provided a space for both the military and CSGs to face each other, and to communicate. Through this process of exchange and dialogue the GWGP helped to facilitate the change of perceptions and attitudes of the military and CSG towards each other. There has been a transformation from a predominantly negative relationship to the development of trust and confidence between the parties. The former 'enemies' have now begun to treat each other with respect and openness. This was confirmed during the data collection when both of these parties expressed that they have increased

trust in the other groups, and that they would be able to work in a partnership in the field. The two tables below summarize their responses:

Table 1: Perception of Civil Society towards the military

Perceptions Before of Civil Society Towards Military	Perceptions of Civil Society now towards the military
Pacifier	Lessen fear with men in uniform
Oppressor	More disciplined
Human rights violator	Partners
Authoritarian	Protectors of the people
Warriors	Apolitical
Monolithic	Progressive
Aggressors	Humans with heart
Looters	Can be trusted
Abusers	

Table 2: Perception of Military towards the CSGs

Perceptions of the Military Towards Civil Society (Before)	Perceptions of Military towards the civil society (At present)
Anti-military	Partners in peace
Anti-government	Advocates for reforms
Front for rebels groups	Voice of the people and community from the ground
Reserve forces	Can be trusted

The process of regular gatherings and dialogue created a space for each and every one to talk, to understand each other’s mission, and through the meetings each party was able to acknowledge, assert, and convey their perception from their own standpoint. This became the critical part of the group’s formation which enabled the members to begin to understand each other. Building trust and gaining respect then followed.



BAPA SAMMY MAULANA OF CBCS

The group’s answers could be summarized by Sammy Maulana’s statement: “The military are now different, they even participated with us

in our walk for peace, and they even hold the banner that says ‘support the peace process’ which did not happen in the past. The military only sees these activities in the past as anti-military operations.”

2.2 Mechanisms adopted by the group

Although it has been seen that the GWGP has had significant effects, we must question what the major mechanisms which sustain the group are. First, the loose and informal structure that the group adopted has helped enormously in building a positive relationship between parties, as well as to facilitate the parties to be increasingly transparent. Lt. Col. Benjie Hao stated that, “I can see the group just on this first level, that this model of group organizing remains small and loose but creative in dealing with conflict and issues.” It was in this loose group set up that members were able to speak out without fear, and to sustain their participation in activities voluntarily.

Another mechanism that the group adopted was the shared leadership and shared commitment for peace in Maguindanao. Timuay Sannie Bello of Timuay Justice and Governance expressed, “It has levelled-off our concept of peace and development in the province of Maguindanao. It created a space for us to understand what we mean by peace and how to translate and work it out together on the ground.”

The third mechanism adopted was the dialogue and collaboration process itself. Dialogue produced a better understanding between the parties, and by working together there was a validation of their trust and respect towards each other. As a resident of the municipal of Ampatuan said: “we both have tested each other’s sincerity of how can we work together on the ground without doubts and fear.” All of the members have an open line to each other, and agree to help each other whatever issue arises.

2.3 Towards personal and structural change

The group identified some factors that they consider as individual and structural changes of the activities and collaborations conducted. These are as follows:

Table 3: Activities Conducted and Observable Changes of GWGP

Activities Conducted	Personal Changes	Initial Structural Changes
Regular Meetings and Dialogues	Soldiers raised awareness on issues of human rights	Military being apolitical
Conflict Analysis in Battalions	Shared perspective on the different issues on the Group	Increasing civil participation
Dialogue with Community Leaders	Soldiers following rules and guidelines	Less use of force and combat operations
Voters Education	Better relationship between soldiers and civilians	Military were not taking sides in clan conflict or RIDO preventing it to escalate
Community Dialogues	Building relationship of CSGs and military with the communities	Civil Military Operations as peacebuilding mechanism and relationship building
Joint Peace Activities (Walk for Peace, Light a Candle for Peace, Photography for Peace)	Appreciation of each other's unique and complementing roles	Military's consciousness of peacebuilding lens in their activities

The findings show that the military and CSGs collaborated in different activities such as regular and informal meetings, joint formal activities, and education sessions. These joint activities have become instruments for relational change, and demonstrate progression towards a stage of healing and humanization. The observable changes have been articulated by the CSGs and military during the FGD as significant to build a better relationship among civilians and military.

Sharing of perspectives and awareness, and adherence to the rules of engagement and basic human rights is already an important ingredient for the collaboration and relationships among the members of the GWGP. During the reflection they expressed that they are slowly observing initial institutional gains, such as the military becoming apolitical or neutral, professional in dealing with local politicians, and are not being used to move the self-interests of local politicians.

2.4 BMFIs role

As for the role of BMFI, the respondents clearly pointed out that Balay Mindanaw's existing influence and partnership with the military will give an advantage in continuing the engagement with the military sector in Maguindanao, even when there is a change of command. They encouraged Balay Mindanaw to be part of the continuing formation and journey of the group, as well as to facilitate capacity building for both the civil society and military. The GWGP defines more clearly the impact of BMFI's role. It is clearly seen that at present collaborative initiatives are taking place, and it is now possible to intervene in actual violent affected areas such as Maguindanao – these are actions which have not occurred previously.

Through these findings it is also apparent that in the future Balay Mindanaw will be much more effective and creative in creating spaces like the GWGP for different stakeholders to collaborate together. Aside from the role of bridging and facilitation, we were able to learn that the GWGP experience contributed to the empowerment and humanization of each member. The GWGP encourages Balay Mindanaw to continue being active in several important areas: peace education; advocate for policy change; lobby for the institutionalization of peacebuilding in the military academic institutions, and; enhance our capacity-building to include other legally mandated structures like the peace and order councils in the local government units.

2.5 Hindering factors

As the group's journey has reached one year the issues that need to be faced by the group are also increasing. Although starting with peace and human rights issues on the ground, the GWGP has begun to touch upon issues such as illegal logging, drugs, poor justice system, and kidnapping. What has occurred is the communities are beginning to place trust in the group and to approach it when they are in need of help. Although the level of trust which this indicates is a strong reflection of the group, this also presents a challenge in that the capacity of the group is at present not able to handle these problems.

In addition the participation of other stakeholders like the academe and church was not sustained, and the inclusion of local government units is lacking in the organizational development. Another issue is that the group does not have programs which it can claim as its own; rather its initiative has been a partnership of each group member's initiative and program. However the members of the GWGP have recently expressed during their reflection

session that although they wish to continue their individual programs, they also want to explore the possibility of developing GWGPs initiatives as distinct or complementary projects.

An additional issue of central importance is that the changing of military leaders and units was seen to affect the group's progress. For example the follow through discussions and gatherings were not sustained when Lt. Col. Benjie Hao was replaced. While in the past meetings were regular (including informal follow-through discussion of critical issues), since Lt. Col. Hao's replacement meetings could not be sustained. This has been the case with the three subsequent officers who replaced him.

Lastly, the resources which support the group were provided mostly by the military. Financial, human, and logistical resources are important to sustain the gatherings, mobilization, and collaboration of GWGP. The implication of this now is the GWGP is very dependent on the 6th ID for resources, and there is the potential for a severe conflict of interests.

3. Conclusion

The GWGP has provided the space for civil society and military to engage in dialogue regarding peace issues in Maguindanao. In the process both parties were able to understand and change each other's perspective, and to collaborate on different activities and respective peace efforts in the community. The effectiveness of the collaboration of the GWGP has certainly been proven, as this group was one of the mechanisms that helped transform the negative image of the 6th ID in Maguindanao during the 2010 local and national elections. In this sense it has been a wakeup call for the 6th ID.

Overall it is apparent that the GWGP was able to building a strong relationship, as well as trust and confidence between the CSGs and the 6th ID. The responsible mechanisms were shown to be both regular and informal meetings, gathering for dialogue, ensuring the possibility of feedback (both from military and CSGs), and collaborative activities. The initiative of GWGP created a venue and event which had not occurred previously. It began a cycle of empowerment where the parties could now understand each other's role, and begin to work together without fear or suspicion. This was essential to the group's formation and development, since the date of its formation in 2010.

This trust and sincerity was being tested and validated during GWGP collaboration efforts on the ground. Both are proving each other's commitment,



The GWGP together with BAU and EKS-EKS of Balay Mindanaw

the CSGs showing that they can engage in activities with the military, and vice versa. Both have the realization that openness and transparency is crucial in building a positive relationship and working harmoniously. Furthermore this has served to challenge the usual perception of the military as a force for combat and violent action, and start to win the trust of those at the community level.

The CMO concept and theories, which functioned in a very limited capacity in the past (mostly targeting counter-insurgency), has since expanded and served as a bridge between the 6th ID to the CSGs. With this bridge the military is able to convey accurately their purpose and mission at present in Maguindanao, to show that they are beginning to recognize the importance of positive civil society relations, especially after the massacre incident. On the other hand, the CSG was able to engage with the military openly on issues through the GWGP. Internal and operational issues are immediately clarified and addressed appropriately during the GWGP gatherings.

For one year, the group has experienced small but significant victories. These are concrete and tangible outcomes that all of the members treasured and learned from. However as the GWGP journey continues it is very important to take into consideration areas for improvement, and shift the focus to the future. Such issues include but are not limited to sustainability, group development, and addressing root cause of the conflict.

The development of the group has been an inspiration for each member. From a simple gathering for peace, the GWGP has transformed into a mechanism for collaboration on peace efforts on the ground. Being a loose and small group has been an advantage when it comes to management and commitment. However we have also noted several key issues in the paragraphs of this report. Yet what is clear is that we must embrace the lessons-learned in these pages as an opportunity for improvement, rather than be saddened at the short-comings. It is only through a slow process of constant review that the group will be able to achieve its full potential for the fostering of sustainable peace.

Chapter 5

Lessons from the Practice

Training practitioners to identifying and addressing conflict

A case study of a village in Kandy District, Sri Lanka

By Indrani Rajendran

The paper studies and assesses the performance of conflict transformation practitioners in the Kandy district, who had been given training on conflict transformation and subsequently attempted to identify and address the causes of conflict on the ground. This research was done in Panwila, Kandy district and this paper presents this activity as a case study.

1. Background

Sri Lanka is situated in the centre of the Indian Ocean. It consists of twenty two provinces and three main ethnicities. The Sinhalese are the majority community while the Tamils and the Muslims are the minority groups. These three ethnicities follow four main religions they are Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam.

In Sri Lanka there has been a thirty year civil war between the government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation of Tamil Tigers Elam (LTTE). As a result of the war the bond between the communities has been broken up and significant mistrust has developed, especially between the Sinhala and the Tamil communities. In part this is due to the many injustices which occurred throughout the war, and thus the communities are today greatly divided both mentally and physically. According to the announcement of the Sri Lanka government the war between the government of Sri Lanka and rebels came to an end on the 19th of May 2009 (Chamberlane, 2009).

Towards the end of the thirty year civil war there were a large amount of internally displaced people (IDP). Initially they were settled in welfare camps, however thereafter the IDPs were resettled back into their respective places by the Sri Lankan government with the aid of the United Nation (UN) agencies. Even though the war has ended and victims are resettled, the issues of human

rights and needs emerge as pressing every day. In combination with the discussed mistrust and division, this reaffirms the need for peace activists and/or peace practitioners in Sri Lanka.

I work in an organization called Partners in Alternative Training (PALTRA) which is situated in Colombo. It is predominantly involved in trainings, consultancies, and baseline surveys. I work as a Programme Officer cum Project Manager. I am also involved in consultancies and in conducting the training programmes. Specifically from 2007 to 2011 PALTRA has been involved in conducting conflict transformation training programmes, in which I have been the project manager, as well as one of the individuals conducting monitoring and implementing the trainings. As a result of the training programme we were able to create seventy practitioners who came from varied backgrounds such as trade unions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community based organizations (CBOs).

For this particular research I selected twenty practitioners from a community based organization called Arena for the Development of Facilitators (ADFA). It is a community based organization which is based in a village called Panwila. It is one of the district secretariat divisions of the Kandy district. In Panwila there are three main ethnicities live together, and even though they have not experience the same mistrust as a result of the war, injustice and separatism still prevails in the community. Consequently there are many triggers for conflict in this area. If this situation continues at the community level there will once again be devastation in Sri Lanka. Hence there is a need for conflict transformation practitioners in this area to work towards peace building within these communities.

2. Description of the study

Responding to this need a one-year training was given to these practitioners-in-the-making. Following their training they were expected to identify and address micro-level and meso-level conflict. Unfortunately, following the completion of this training the conflict transformation practitioners were unable to address conflicts beyond the simple micro-conflicts level. The central question to consider is whether this was due to the personality of the practitioners, to a lack of skills, or to do with the context. This is the central motivation of my research project.

The action research was conducted for five months and mainly participatory methodologies were used to collect data from the field. The sample groups

were the staff of PALTRA and twenty conflict transformation practitioners from ADFA. They varied in ethnicity, religion, and gender. During the action research secondary data was reviewed and continuously discussed were had in order to collect authentic data from the sample groups. Throughout all the stages of the action research process the gathered information was reflected upon and reviewed at.

The discussions centrally focused on the curriculum which was used for the training programme, what are the factors that were enabling in terms of addressing conflicts, and why were the practitioners hindered from identifying and addressing conflicts after a certain level. Also we attempted to discuss how supportive the PALTRA project manager had been in assisting and guiding the practitioners throughout the training, as well as after the training programme.

3. Concepts related to the study

Throughout the study several theories were referred to. It was important to use these in order to make sense of the opinions and concepts which appeared in the findings, as will be detailed in the subsequent section.

Importantly, from the theories it was learnt that the process from crisis management to transformation should be going on accordingly, and approached as isolated events or interventions. It is necessary to identify strategies to resolve conflicts so that there will be some natural progression towards transformation. (Lederach, *Building Peace*, 2004, pp. 79-85)

Further the importance to follow systematic approaches while resolving or transforming conflicts is vital. If the correct approaches can be followed while solving conflicts it will mutually satisfy the needs of the conflict parties, and therefore prevents the reoccurrence of conflicts in future. (Schirch, 2004, pp. 49-51)

The peace practitioners' knowledge can be encapsulated as 'perfect nonviolence works perfectly', and that is the reality. While building peace the practitioners should understand the real situation and move towards it. It will be hard for the people to accept peace by non-violent means, but the peace practitioners should have the knowledge and capability to guide them according to their needs. (Galtung, 1998, pp. 266-268) Also the importance of developing the external, internal and organization skills during conflict transformation trainings are emphasized clearly in the reviewed theories. (Francis, 2002, pp. 85-88)

Moreover the significance of developing a strategic approach to training is essential, rather than pre-planning the events and activities of a training course as applicable to varying contexts. People must be taught specific ways of responding to conflict, and therefore the training programme should be process/context specific. It should start with questions related to nature of the conflict, the longer-term view of change, and the strategic design of training initiatives (Lederach, Building Peace, 2004, pp. 108-112).

4. Lessons learnt as a result of the study

As a result of the study there are many lessons learnt which should be considered by the organizations who hope to implement peace education, as well as by the CBOs which are involved in the grassroots-level peace building.

The curriculum used for conflict related training should include the theories of conflict and transformation, as well as the way in which those theories can be integrated and internalized to the specific context. For example, in practice the individuals who received the training felt that they learnt about Galtung's ABC triangle in a way which was far too general. They noted that when they started to analyse conflicts in their context with the help of the ABC triangle, they became confused because they did not have experience adapting and using the tool in a particular context. Therefore this should be taken into account when designing future trainings.

The training curriculum should seek to develop the internal and external skills of the practitioners. For example it should make them think creatively, to have empathy for others, and propagate other skills such as effective communication and keen listening skills. This will help them to expand their knowledge and skill in self-reflexivity and effective personal behaviour in conflict. If such strategies can be included to improve the group action, the result will undoubtedly be more effective practitioners who are more able to face the challenges and risks on the ground. Ultimately this will enable them to become the peace practitioners which Galtung (1998) envisaged.

In addition the trainings should be developed according to the specific needs of the community, rather than a ready-made package which instead caters to the desire of the implementing organizations or funding agencies. This is a significant negative issue which can be noticed in many of the trainings conducted by NGOs, both in Sri Lanka and globally. They only consider their own needs and budget lines and not the real needs of the community. PALTRA also should consider following the process/context approach and not the content/

transfer approach in future trainings. As Lederach emphasizes, if there is to be an effective impact the process/context approach is the most appropriate to employ. This is an effective theory to consider because the approach will mutually satisfy and prevent conflict from reoccurring.

Another lesson learned is that creating strong and effective links with the other NGOs and the local government organizations will help the practitioners to get more support, guidance and encouragement while addressing conflicts in the community (e.g. through skill sharing, cooperation, coordination, and implementation support). For example creating links with the other NGO's provides the ADFA with a strong social network within the area, which can act as a pressure group to help make more responsible decisions. Moreover forging strong links with the local government in the relevant community is extremely important as these offices are often overassertive in controlling their localities. Thus, through the creation of a trusting relationship with the subsystem the interventions staged will become more conducive to creating sustainable peace in the relevant community. This in turn will pressurize the macro-level systems to work towards peace in future.

An additional aspect which will help improve the effectiveness of the process is if the selection of the participants for the conflict related trainings is made using very particular criteria. For example if the participants are recognized as having a certain level of maturity it will be easier for them to face challenges in the communities in which they are practicing, and thus increase the chance for sustainable peace. Conversely, if the participants selected are very immature this could endanger any prospect for peace at the community level, and thus the act of inserting a practitioner would be more harmful than good. An example of this might be that the community won't come forward to elaborate about the conflict situation, and it will get submerged.

Another approach is to give the practitioners the capacity to develop local peace forums in the community and organize problem solving workshops. Such an approach is ideal as it provides the community with the ability to resolve self-identified conflicts by themselves. Initially the trained practitioners can be involved in developing forums and problem solving workshops, to familiarize the community with the more theoretical concepts of peace and conflict. This will help the community to become empowered as actors in the conflict resolution process. Moreover this may lead to the creation of a bond and trust-building within the community which will contribute to sustainable peace in the future.

5. Conclusion

The prevailing injustice, mistrust, and separatism among ethnic groups in Sri Lanka needs to be changed by creating awareness of peace and conflict issues, and empowering people through knowledgeable and skilled trainers. PALTRA seems to already have taken this initiative, however it is apparent that their interventions require on-going follow-up activities.

While the actual training of peace practitioners may not have appeared successful it is important to note that the outcomes and lessons-learned from Panwila can be applied to many multi-ethnic villages in Sri Lanka. This is particularly valuable as it is only through acknowledging the weaknesses in such interventions that we may move towards more appropriate and effective practice. In Sri Lanka, particularly as there are many diverse communities, this is a crucial element in the struggle to sustain peace over the long-run. Particularly it is the CBOs and other organizations involved in ground-level peace building activities who should take note of this study and its findings, should they hope to have a fruitful and sustained impact.

Exiled dreams: enhancing psychosocial accompaniment practice Working with female Sri Lankan Extremely Vulnerable Individuals (EVIs) in Thailand

By Zarah Kathleen Toring Alih

This short paper is an action research (AR) that looked upon the methods to improve my work as a psychosocial counsellor in serving the urban refugees and asylum seekers in Bangkok. My study looked into how to best provide psychosocial accompaniment to Extremely Vulnerable Individuals (EVIs), particularly to the female Sri Lankan asylum seekers who represent the highest number of EVI caseloads that the Jesuit Refugee Service-Urban Refugee Program (JRS-URP) is handling.

Thailand is situated at the centre of South East Asia. It is the 50th largest country in terms of total area and the 21st most populous country with 60 million inhabitants. It is surrounded by countries in a conflict and post-conflict state, such as Burma, Laos, and Cambodia. These countries have also produced refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced people (IDPs) and migrant workers. Although Thailand is one of few countries in South East Asia hosting a large number of refugees, asylum seekers, stateless people, IDPs and migrants, it is not party to the 1951 Refugee Convention. Nevertheless, it has seen 1.2 million refugees seeking shelter within its borders, according to UNHCR (2009).

The absence of government mechanisms to respond to registration and refugee claims for asylum is a huge gap that needs to be addressed. Urban refugees and asylum seekers from more than 40 countries are still considered illegal under Thai law, and thus are unable to engage in gainful employment or access public welfare services.

The Jesuit Refugee Service is a Catholic non-profit organization whose mission is to serve, advocate and accompany asylum seekers. It is the only agency in Thailand that caters to asylum seekers. It strives to recognize the psychological, emotional, and material needs of refugees. The JRS-URP has recently developed a position intended to provide psychosocial support for asylum seekers. This position is designed to provide support to those participants of the program considered EVIs, particularly focusing on women. The URP has formulated guidelines and vulnerability criteria to prioritize asylum seekers who are registered with UNHCR.

As the psychosocial counsellor of the URP team I have taken on a great responsibility; to provide psychosocial accompaniment to women, to ensure access to counselling, and to give psychosocial support. It is hoped that these activities will help strengthen their capacity, and manage their safety.

1. Research design

The research problem is that the concept of psychosocial accompaniment is a relatively new, and as such there is not a great deal of discussion regarding what constitutes best practice, particularly focusing on women EVIs. In parallel the JRS-URP has not previously targeted women in their interventions so this position is one which is treading new ground for the organization. The socio-political environment in which we work, and from which people we work with are from, is another factor which presents significant challenges to being effective in our interventions.

As such, and as has been previously mentioned, this paper aims to reflect on my experience in this position, and draw out the vital lessons-learned. Thus, the research goals are to better understand the nature of accompaniment work in the case of the URP EVIs, and from this understanding identify ways to enhance psychosocial accompaniment within the working context of JRS. Furthermore, it is hoped that we may understand how these lessons may enhance understanding of the system and contextualize the work which is being carried out. It is hoped that JRS and other agents of change working with refugees will benefit from the findings of this research, and through them may better understand how to accompany women and design appropriate services for specific groups like EVI women. It is only through developing a comprehensive understanding of these issues that I may hope to become a better practitioner in the future.

At this juncture it is also important to disclose the initial motivation for this project. Within the JRS-URP I am the only female, and I am a young, educated Muslim from the southernmost tip of the Philippines. The rest of the URP team consists predominantly of Thai caseworkers and a fellow Filipino project director. This, in my mind, suggests that I am an ideal candidate to undertake this research project.

2. Relevant theories and applied information

2.1 Issues Relating to Displacement

Globally the landscape of conflict has transformed and following the end of Cold War the character of conflict changed typically from inter-state to intra-state (Ogato, 2002). Significant to this paper is that the change in the dynamic has resulted in the displacement of many individuals, who have become refugees, asylum seekers, and IDPs.

Looking towards refugees themselves it has been established that an average of more than 50% of refugees present mental health problems, such as chronic trauma and distress (WHO, 1994). Until recently, traditional emergency response was limited to food, water and shelter, and this holds severe implications on the ability to assist refugees through a difficult period in their lives. While the recognition of mental health needs of refugees is emerging it remains poorly addressed, particularly as allocation of resources has not followed.

When looking in greater detail at the issue of psychological stress experienced by the refugees, it should be approached not only from the medical perspective, but also take into account the broader contextual aspects of refugees and the care providers themselves. The word psychosocial encompasses mental and emotional well-being, as well as the stresses which give rise to mental tensions. In addition social determinants include poverty, social exclusion, and gender violence.

Providing accompaniment is a concept significant to mitigating and combating psychosocial difficulties because it gives the asylum seekers and refugees the feeling of security and hope. The meaning of accompaniment and the way JRS accompanies the asylum seekers and refugees has helped me to identify their approaches and best practice for women. For JRS, being a companion is a practical and effective action.

Women are a group which has very specific needs, and at present these are not being addressed by activities specifically targeting them. In the course of recovering from the injuries caused by dislocation from their countries, women asylum seekers need to improve the relations of trust among them. This is done in two ways: (1) conducting home visits and (2) organizing support groups.

JRS continues to develop their own understanding of their role in accompaniment and what is the best way to accompany female Sri Lankan asylum seekers. Diana Francis wrote that "...if we are to move beyond war, violence and injustice, fundamental change is needed in our understanding of our own identity and in our attitude to collective responsibility." (2004, p.142).

2.2 Levels of Change / Transformation

To assist me in looking at the process that JRS must employ to provide the best accompaniment, I have chosen the following peacebuilding frameworks. These portray processes and approaches that can be used to promote positive change through psychosocial accompaniment, and by transforming structures to support those we work with and for.

In particular I have reflected on John Paul Lederach's (2003) levels of transformation. According to Lederach there are four levels of change, that is to say the personal, relational, cultural, and structural stages of change. The personal stage consists of changes in attitudes, behaviour, and knowledge, whereas the relational stage comprises the formation and development of relationships. The following stage affects cultural change which involves the standards that help maintain peace throughout. Finally structural change embraces the latest traditions, guidelines, methods and even people or leaders (cited in Schirch, 2004). However, although Lederach believes that all of these stages promote change, he is careful to place more emphasis on the structural stage. It is believed that this stage is the crucial element in constructive change in society. It is this which promotes the reduction of violence, justice to become more widespread, creative responses, and constructive conflicts (which any society must experience in order to progress).

Lederach's framework connects to the experiences that I have had as the psychosocial counsellor of the Urban Refugee Program of JRS. To add an additional level of consideration I believe it is important to note the changes that are occurring with me, as the practitioner on the ground. It is imperative that the practitioner is aware of the change occurring at each level of transformation that Lederach discusses, and it is through developing such a comprehensive understanding of the context that we may understand how to best approach psychosocial accompaniment.

3. Findings and reflections

3.1 The needs of female EVIs

It was found that most of the Sri Lankan EVIs have the same priority of needs as other refugees. The needs which have been observed are predominantly focused around the capacity to become self-reliant, more economically independent, and also to build their self-esteem. However one need of central importance is that of capacity building in terms of language. This is because it is a necessary tool not only to survive but to rebuild their lives in Thailand. By developing the ability to engage with the country and people where the asylum seekers are living, it is more likely that they will develop a sustainable livelihood, and even move away from long-term dependence on assistance. Without language the Sri Lankan EVI women feel helpless, and this feeling makes it extremely hard to adjust to the new culture and environment they are immersed in.

However as language is not a skill which is developed quickly, short-run capacity development must be run in parallel. This can be done through the promotion of income generating activities as a coping mechanism. My personal experience suggests that when home visits are conducted it is useful to assess whether the individual has any skills which can make use of their time. When asking about these skills, it is important to suggest that engaging oneself in these may not only become a source of income but also act as a coping mechanism, which will empower them in their current situation.

It has also been found that the female EVIs need to feel they are not alone in their situation, and to shift their outlook from an individual perspective to a collective one – this can be done through organizing individuals into a group or collective. While not a permanent solution it is apparent that groups with a larger sense of belonging often come together to address each other's needs, as well as utilize each other's specialized skills. Through having both an individual and group role, and through each other's support they will become more self-confident and hopeful for the future. Feeling supported by the other members of their group can help them regain their strength economically, emotionally, physically, spiritually, etc. This was in fact one of the practical realizations that emerged during several support group sessions which we conducted.

This is especially relevant for those extremely vulnerable groups such as single mothers who face the difficulty of taking care of their children, etc. Through

this mechanism they are able to share their problems, thoughts, and ideas with others in a similar position. However, as it stands currently while many of these women live in the same building they are afraid to leave their rooms. Thus the development of a group is an essential.

3.2 JRP and female EVIs

Whilst my organization had recognized that it is important that there is a woman working within the URP team (to relate to female participants in the project), it was discovered that it also matters whether the interpreter is also a woman. This is something that was not considered in the past, as it was believed the presence of a male interpreter would not affect the productivity of the accompaniment activities.

In any case the female EVIs expressed their appreciation that the visits were made by a female staff member. While there I would ask about their daily life – e.g. their health, English classes, etc. – and this would take the form of a conversation rather than an interview which is trying to extract information. When they shared with me that this mattered, they expressed that I am more like a friend than an officer, that they feel they can tell me anything (particularly the single women, who are more vulnerable).

This indicates that the JRP-URP is beginning to approach the accompaniment of female EVIs in an effective manner, although there is certainly room to expand upon this discovery. Psychosocial accompaniment is, after all, not just the physical presence of an accompanying person but an expression of solidarity, of support, and of hope. For example, I don't often give my numbers to the refugees I work with but in the case of single mothers and other EVIs who may need more attention, I do. While I feel this necessary, I also clearly express that it is only to be used in the case of emergency. I am afar, but also constantly available for consultation should they need it.

In addition although the organization has developed a sound knowledge of the needs of its participants there are limited resources and capacity to act on these. It was found that the JRS should explore other resources outside as well as within JRS. For example there needs to be administrative support so that we can change the program design to incorporate more creative ways to engage with the refugees. At present there are key people in the office who are contributing significantly to the struggle to make this a reality, however efforts are still lacking.

Significantly, I learned from the clients that it matters that the JRS takes part in/becomes a member of a network of organizations which have overlap in the thematic areas of programming. We must acknowledge that these other organizations can add to our achievements in psychosocial accompaniment through providing the opportunity to consult, coordinate, and cooperate. We need to build and strengthen such networks in order to extend our effectiveness of psychosocial support and wellbeing. As a note, it is believed that this does not have to come directly from JRS.

3.3 My role in accompaniment

I wasn't confident initially that I could do this job given my background, which was not as a psychosocial counsellor. My eagerness and commitment to learn allowed me to be selected, however I didn't – and to a degree still don't – think this is enough. I may need specific training and education to improve my effectiveness when working with refugees. I believe I need to develop more professional capacity, even though the feedback I receive is good.

I also learnt that one needs to develop a method of coping with situations of emergency, and this can take a variety of forms. Personally it has been a long and stressful journey; sharing my experiences with peers, establishing my own networks of support and encouragement, and being able to rely on the friendship and support of my co-workers has been of crucial importance. In the one year and two months I have spent in this role, the way that I have been able to take care and look after myself has helped a lot. It is because of this experience that I express with confidence a central finding of this action research: reflecting and focusing on self-care is an integral element of being an effective practitioner of psychosocial accompaniment.

4. Conclusion

An important assumption underlying this action research is that in addition to the counselling services, the creation of a space allowing the Sri Lankan EVI women to listen, share, and understand their collective issues and problems will lead to a more fruitful process.

With regards to JRP itself, it is seen that there is room for expansion of programming and more creative approaches. For example by incorporating the above idea into the URP design, the psychosocial accompaniment conducted by JRS can become more effective, and help to reduce anxiety and emotional stress more sustainably. In my opinion this boils down to the idea that if the

team members are not decision makers and are not given enough creativity in enhancing the program, it is nigh impossible to positively change the system.

Most importantly, when beginning this project I did not expect to encounter the organizational dynamic as a significant problem in the overall process. Yet while the effectiveness and importance of the JRS-URP is not discounted or discredited, the above paragraphs show that there are ways to enhance the impact of what is currently being done. In addition, the fact that the head of the organization was not very supportive towards this project suggests the need to further explore the relational problems which may exist within the team. My team members, however, were very supportive.

Finally through this research project I have learned to be more reflective and reflexive, specifically when I started to record my reflections in my research diary. I have enhanced my capacity and also critiqued myself on being sensitive in certain issues and occasions. This was also realized by the comments I received from my colleagues, for example when the project director commented on the changes in me.

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