

First Quarter, 2005

Global Future



Preventing **violent** conflict

can humanity move beyond
band-aid solutions?



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Global Future is published quarterly by World Vision to encourage debate and discussion on development issues.

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Global Future is distributed to many NGOs and non-profit organisations in developing countries. Donations to support our production and mailing costs are very welcome (US\$20 suggested).

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ISSN 0742-1524

Serious about security

Since 11 September 2001, security has been uppermost on the world's agenda. Even if we do not directly experience violent conflict, we are at least more conscious of its potential wider effects. The real threats of terrorism (particularly nuclear) shatter our complacency.

But rushed investment in "security" may be short-sighted. For many who are directly facing violent conflict, things are no better, or are worse. Conflicts in Africa alone are costing millions of lives, and rendering millions more unliveable. And as Stephen Stedman points out, "9/11" has had the economic effect of pushing 10 million Africans below the poverty line.

This *Global Future* comes at a critical time. Reports from the UN Secretary-General, the UN High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change and the Millennium Project call for urgent change in how we view conflict and development; a global conference in July 2005 will press for firm government-civil society partnerships to prevent conflict and forge peace; there are calls for treaties on the arms trade, and against terrorism.

In these pages are three major inter-related premises:

- It is crystal-clear that neither development nor security is achievable without the other. In Hilary Benn's words: "We are only as safe as the weakest state among us, or the most vulnerable group of people." Stephen Stedman notes for example that the most affluent state's security is hostage to the poorest state's ability to contain a deadly new disease.
- Dealing with conflict **after** it has broken out costs far more – in direct harm done, in rescue and repair, in repercussions. The only sane option is a radical paradigm shift from reaction to prevention. We need stronger collective security measures; far more timely help for countries in trouble; firm preventive actions in-country. Sadly, good prevention doesn't win elections: if you effectively prevent, nothing "happens". The ballot box may reward dramatic, expensive "too little, too late" reactions over modest longer-term prevention.
- "Serious about security" means serious about civil society. Too long has its potential to promote peace been under-estimated, sidelined. Some inspiring initiatives, movements and agents of peace are featured in these pages.

– Heather Elliott

Prevention and a new collective security – the Report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change

Stephen Stedman



PHOTO - JON WARREN / WORLD VISION

Children in Haiti, a country currently suffering severe poverty, environmental degradation and civil unrest

IN 1945, THE FOUNDERS OF the United Nations forged a new system of collective security that sought “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war”. They agreed that the most pressing threat to international peace and security was aggression by states, and pledged to respond collectively in the event of such aggression.

Over the last 60 years, the membership of the United Nations has evolved dramatically and so, too, have threats to international peace and security. Yet international consensus on the purpose and viability of collective security has failed to keep pace. Cognisant of this widening gap, UN Secretary-General

Kofi Annan warned the General Assembly in 2003 that the UN had “come to a fork in the road”, and that “this might be a moment no less decisive than 1945 itself.” He raised the prospect of a United Nations that fell into irrelevancy in the face of unilateral action by states, and challenged the member states to make the United Nations a more effective and equitable provider of security for the 21st century.

To encourage member states to think hard about far-reaching changes, Mr Annan appointed the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. He asked the Panel to identify current and future threats to international peace and security, assess the

performance of the United Nations in addressing those threats, and make recommendations for strengthening collective responses.

Today's threats inter-related

Delivering its Report to the Secretary-General in December 2004, the Panel has offered a thorough assessment of the most compelling contemporary threats to international peace and security: **1.** poverty, deadly infectious disease and environmental degradation; **2.** conflict between and within states (including genocide, ethnic cleansing and large-scale human rights violations); **3.** nuclear, biological, chemical and radiological weapons; **4.** terrorism; and **5.** trans-national organised crime.

The challenge today is for states to reach consensus on the urgency of these threats, and commit to an effective, equitable response to all of them. Any new collective security system should provide as robust and effective a response to HIV/AIDS as to terrorism.

The Panel makes the case for contemporary collective security with three claims:

First, today and more than ever, threats are inter-related, and a threat to one is a threat to all. Poverty is strongly associated with the outbreak of civil war; weak states and poor border control facilitate transnational organised crime and illicit trafficking in human beings, nuclear technology and small arms; the terrorist attacks of September 11 had the economic impact of pushing 10 million Africans below the poverty line.

Second, no state, no matter how powerful, can alone insure its invulnerability to contemporary threats. The security of the most affluent state can be held hostage to the ability of the poorest state to contain the outbreak of a deadly new disease. Environmental degradation, nuclear proliferation and terrorism all require sustained international cooperation.

Finally, it cannot be assumed that every state will always be able, or willing, to meet its responsibility to protect its own peoples and not to harm others. If central principles enshrined in international law are truly collectively held values, they must be collectively safeguarded as well.

Prevention is at the heart of the Panel's vision for collective security. The primary challenge for collective security today is to ensure that, for all the threats the Panel identifies, those that are distant do not become imminent and those that are imminent do not actually become destructive.

Development indispensable

In the Panel's vision, development is the indispensable foundation for a collective security system that takes prevention seriously. It is the solution

to the most compelling threats to human security: the poverty and infectious disease that cause millions of deaths yearly. It is necessary for building states that have the capacity to exercise their sovereignty responsibly and states that will continue to be the front-line defence against today's inter-related and global threats. To combat terrorism, stem nuclear proliferation, re-build states after civil wars and crack down on trans-national organised crime requires effective governance and state capacity.

Preventing deadly conflict remains as central to collective security as it did 60 years ago. Yet the UN has failed to take prevention seriously enough; if two peace agreements in the 1990s – the Arusha Accords for Rwanda and the Bicesse Agreement for Angola – had been successfully implemented, several million lives could have been saved.

The current complacency must yield to a new determination

The Panel has focused on building several capacities for prevention. It has recommended ways to better support preventive diplomacy, mediation and peace-keeping activities, and through the prescribed establishment of a Peacebuilding Commission, a way for states emerging from conflict to have more coordinated and sustained assistance to prevent a relapse into deadly violence.

Warning of the grave consequences posed by a potential cascade of nuclear proliferation, or by nuclear and biological terrorism, the Panel urges states to take preventive action now. It has pointed to the urgency of safeguarding, consolidating and eliminating vulnerable weapons and weapons-usable materials. Looking toward our future biological security, the Panel makes a compelling case for building global public health so that natural or deliberate disease outbreaks do not become pandemics. That a catastrophic nuclear or biological attack has not yet occurred

should not induce complacency, but rather be taken as an exceptional opportunity for prevention.

Preventing the emergence and growth of terrorism is one of the most compelling challenges of our time. The Panel thus calls upon the Secretary-General to develop a comprehensive strategy against terrorism, including addressing those grievances that terrorists exploit for their own ends. The Panel also calls upon the General Assembly to expedite negotiations toward a comprehensive convention on terrorism, settling once and for all on a definition of terrorism that unequivocally condemns the targeting and killing of civilians.

All of these recommendations are integral to the Panel's vision for collective security. Yet the Panel has stressed that building preventive capacity is not enough. It diagnoses as the gravest failure a refusal by member states to get serious about prevention. The Panel's recommendations and its vision for collective security cannot be realised unless this complacency yields to a new determination.

Prevention could not be more firmly and clearly embedded in the Panel's vision for collective security. The package of recommendations submitted by the Panel represent not just an effort to prevent the emergence of particular threats, but also a blueprint to realise and maintain the ultimate pre-requisite for effective prevention: that of a functional and credible overarching system of collective security. Heads of state would do well not to forget this when they gather this September to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the United Nations. ■

Dr Stephen John Stedman is Special Adviser to the United Nations Secretary General. He was formerly Research Director for the UN High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. To see the Panel's Report A more secure world: Our shared responsibility, go to: www.un.org/secureworld/

Development, peace and security

Neclá Tschirgi

PHOTO - JAMES EAST / WORLD VISION



Children play in a bombed, abandoned school building in Kabul, Afghanistan

IT TOOK TWO WORLD WARS within 30 years to catapult prevention to the forefront of the international agenda.

In 1945 the United Nations was created to save future generations from the “scourge of war”. Simultaneously, an intricate web of legal, diplomatic, political, economic and security institutions was established to prevent the outbreak of war among states. Throughout the latter part of the 20th century, the international community was able to prevent a number of potential inter-state wars and, most importantly, to contain the Cold War from turning into a third world war within a single century.

While wars among states became the focus of much preventive effort, other types of violent conflict – especially local or civil wars – were basically left to fester, particularly when they did not play into the dynamics of the Cold War. Often combining socio-economic, environmental, political, human rights and humanitarian

dimensions, these wars had horrendous human and material costs. Yet the international community was ill-prepared to deal with such conflicts. International security institutions and policies were not designed to cover intra-state conflicts.

Meanwhile, development assistance programmes and institutions worked **in** or **around** but rarely **on** conflicts; instead, they focused narrowly on sectoral areas such as health, education, agriculture, infra-structure and capacity building while ignoring the structural problems that often led to violent intra-state conflicts. Development actors did not see the relevance of their work to conflict prevention even though, ironically, official development aid was itself a preventive measure – albeit designed to underpin the security and stability of “friendly” states as part of the rivalry between the two power blocs.

Post–Cold War shift

It was only with the end of the Cold War that violent intra-state conflicts

in the developing countries gained serious international attention. In the 1990s, conflict prevention and peace-building emerged as international priorities. As peace-building shed its original focus on “post-conflict” peace consolidation and reconstruction, conflict prevention and peace-building have increasingly become co-terminous to embrace the overlapping agendas for peace and development – especially in developing country contexts.

Preventing war and building peace are not always and necessarily identical endeavours. Peace-building is a larger agenda which recognises that peace is not simply the absence of war, violence and aggression. It encompasses a wide range of efforts, specifically in the area of socio-economic and political development, to prevent violent conflicts, to bring peace where conflict has broken, and to assist in post-conflict reconstruction to avoid a relapse into violence. Peace-building is the deliberate, active and sustained commitment to identifying and eliminating the conditions that can lead to violence as a result of a cumulative process of human acts of omission or commission. Thus, peace requires pro-active agents and appropriate instruments and mechanisms in each epoch.

Understanding and innovation

During the 1990s, there were serious efforts at multiple levels to better understand and address the developmental aspects of intra-state conflicts. Research has been instrumental in disentangling some of the complex mechanisms through which developmental problems engender conflict. For example, unchecked population growth can create environmental pressures which in turn lead to erosion of livelihoods, culminating in violent conflicts over

access to scarce and dwindling natural resources including land, water or grazing pastures for pastoralists. HIV/AIDS can contribute to state failure by destroying a country's social fabric. Unfulfilled expectations of land reform, social justice, political participation and human rights can facilitate a country's gradual descent into violence. In countries with lootable natural resources, political conflicts can mutate into criminal violence involving trans-border conflict trade, money laundering, illegal flow of arms, drugs and other contraband.

Alongside a greater understanding of conflict dynamics in developing countries, the international community has gradually started to design conflict-sensitive development strategies. New programmes and projects have been created in such areas as human rights, security sector reform and rule of law. Equally important, there have been serious efforts to introduce conflict-sensitive "lenses" to mainstream development programmes. Innovative methodologies such as conflict and risk analysis, conflict assessment, and peace and conflict impact assessment (PCIA) have been developed and put to use by bilateral and multi-lateral donor and development agencies.

Perhaps the most important innovations have been in the realm of normative and institutional development. Although the United Nations Charter explicitly recognised the links between international peace and security, during the Cold War it was impossible to deal with these goals in an integrated and mutually reinforcing way. For almost 50 years, the concept of peace applied to state security rather than human security. In the 1990s, human security gained prominence: protecting civilians in conflict areas, controlling small arms and light weapons, eliminating anti-personnel landmines, eradicating poverty and regulating conflict trade became part of the peace-building agenda. Existing institutions expanded their mandates to address human security and promote peace-building, while new institutions, such as the African Union and the International

Criminal Court, were established to undertake new responsibilities in peace-making, peace-keeping, and peace-building. While the 1990s were sadly not free from violent conflict and war, it is worth noting that the numbers of conflicts began to diminish markedly by the turn of the century. The *Millennium Declaration* was a significant milestone for the international community in its re-commitment to the twin agendas of development and security.

After September 11, debate again revolved around the false choice: security or development

Regress?

September 11 and the US-led "war against terrorism" re-established the importance of state security and the continued threat of inter-state wars, terrorism, weapons of mass destruction and trans-national crime. Amidst ongoing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the conflict prevention and peace-building agenda that focused on the inter-dependence between security and development seemed to have lost ground. The political debates at the United Nations and beyond again revolved around a false choice between security and development. The developing countries privileged development over security while powerful Northern countries pushed for a hard security agenda. It seemed likely that the binary equation was bound to further divide the international community and erase the important gains of the 1990s.

That danger might still be averted after the publication of two recent reports: the recently-released Report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, entitled *A more secure world: Our shared responsibility*, and the Report of the Millennium Project entitled *Investing in development: A practical plan to achieve the Millennium Development Goals*. The High-level Panel Report identifies six different sets of threats to collective security, and in each case examines ways of meeting the challenges of prevention. It makes the

compelling argument that development is the first line of defence for comprehensive collective security: "It helps combat the poverty, infectious disease and environmental degradation that kill millions and threaten human security. It is vital in helping States prevent and reverse the erosion of State capacity, which is crucial for meeting almost every class of threat. And it is part of a long-term strategy for preventing civil war, and for addressing the environments in which both terrorism and organised crime flourish." Similarly, the Millennium Project Report notes that the Millennium Development Goals are the linchpin to global security: "The Goals not only reflect global justice and human rights – they are also vital to international peace and security, as emphasised by the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change."

These two important reports confirm that there is no turning back the clock on peace-building. Threats originating from the development realm remain front and centre on the prevention agenda. This is not to say that these problems automatically lead to war and violent conflicts. However, they constitute the environment in which individuals, communities, nations and international organisations operate, and when the pressures they create become unsustainable, violence erupts at the human, local or national levels.

It is not only morally unsupportable but also practically unrealistic to achieve sustainable peace, security or stability without addressing the crushing problems of poverty, environmental degradation and human insecurity. As the United Nations prepares for the General Assembly meeting in September 2005 to review progress towards the achievement of the MDGs by 2015, conflict prevention and peace-building have been re-injected into the global agenda with these two important reports and their combined 111 recommendations, which leave little excuse for inaction. ■

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The UK government's approach to conflict prevention

Hilary Benn

CONFLICT IS PRESENT IN ALL societies: sadly, it's part of human existence. But when we are unable to manage it peacefully, we are faced with the destructive force of violent conflict. If conflict is to be prevented, it must be understood. "Prevention" means more than nipping tension in the bud: it means building a society where violent conflict becomes unthinkable. And "understanding" means more than asking what particular grievance one group holds against another: it means looking hard at the wider causes which can allow those grievances to flare up into violence.

Most wars now take place within states rather than between them. There were violent internal conflicts in 27 countries in 2003, and the year was not an exception. The United Nations was engaged in 14 peace support missions, and 68 peace talks or negotiations were ongoing. Some 95% of the global production of opium came from countries in or emerging from civil war. And while there are some signs of progress – the number of internal conflicts worldwide has in fact declined from 42 in 1989, for instance, while those in Africa have fallen from 15 to 9 in the last two years – the human toll exacted by conflict remains impossibly heavy. In two of the African conflicts that continue, violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has claimed over four million lives since 1998, while Sudan's North–South conflict claimed two million before January's peace agreement. And the current humanitarian catastrophe in Darfur has so far claimed at least 70,000 lives.

The cost to development

Poverty does not necessarily cause conflict – though under-development and inequality can increase its likelihood, or sustain it. But violent



PHOTO - COURTESY UK GOVERNMENT

The Rt Hon Hilary Benn

conflict does, almost always, increase poverty and undermine development.

Conflict is among the biggest obstacles to countries achieving the Millennium Development Goals – the targets (to which 189 countries committed themselves in New York in 2000) to halve poverty, fight disease, get all primary age children into school, and reduce infant and maternal mortality. By December this year, about 70 countries will have missed the very first MDG: to get the same numbers of girls into school as boys. Most of the other MDGs are off-track, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. We are not just missing them by 10 years, but by 100 or – according to current trends and projections – even by 150 years.

The social and economic damage wrought by conflict is increasingly compounded by newer problems, such as HIV and AIDS, and drug- and people-trafficking.

Conflict costs lives and livelihoods – and it also costs us, in the international community. Research by the UK Government's Department for International Development (DFID) has shown that dealing with conflict once it has broken out costs the international community four times more than if we had taken action to prevent it. The effects of conflict also spill over into other societies, not least through the flows of refugees from places such as the Balkans in the 1990s.

Dealing with conflict once it has broken out costs four times more than preventing it

So under-development and conflict sit together, and the UK Government fully endorses the findings of December's UN High-level Panel that

neither security nor development is sustainable without the other. In an inter-dependent world, we are only as safe as the weakest state among us, or the most vulnerable group of people. So our collective security can only be achieved if we look at the broadest range of global threats – including poverty, disease and environmental degradation. The Panel's report called on the international system to make progress on **both** security and development, which is why DFID has published in March 2005 a new strategy on the two: *Fighting poverty to build a safer world*.¹

Our role, enshrined in law in the 2002 *International Development Act*, is to help poor people by fighting poverty. It is poor people who suffer most from conflict, and we view their security as a basic right, like health and education.

Three-fold approach

The UK tries to prevent conflict and increase security in three ways. **First**, by three Government departments coordinating their response and working together: the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Ministry of Defence and the Department for International Development. **Second**, by using DFID's development programmes to address as many as possible of the issues – such as poor governance and inequality – that feed conflict. And **third**, in supporting the work of the UN, the EU, and the international financial organisations on conflict prevention.

Conflict Prevention Pools Our diplomatic, defence and development work is brought together in two UK Government Conflict Prevention Pools: one Global, one for Sub-Saharan Africa. Set up in 2001, the Pools received £44 million² funding in 2003/4. In four years, the Global Pool has been active across the world, from Belize to the Balkans, from Indonesia to Sri Lanka. The Africa Pool has been active in the Great Lakes region, West Africa, Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Nigeria and Somalia. The key to each approach is a comprehensive conflict assessment, and a consequent programme of actions to match. In 2004, the Africa Pool has also

supported African peace-keeping missions in Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia.

Development programmes Beyond the conflict pools, much of our work on conflict is integrated into our traditional country development programmes, where 20 conflict advisers are currently working within DFID country offices. DFID's £26 million² Nepal programme in 2003/4, for instance, is targeted entirely at addressing the underlying causes of conflict in that country. Its work includes quick impact projects, like constructing rural roads in conflict-affected areas; strengthening negotiations by supporting some of the key NGOs involved; and supporting the National Human Rights Commission.

Or take Sierra Leone, which in 2003/4 received £22 million² from the Africa Conflict Pool and £23 million from the DFID country programme. The country emerged from a decade of civil war in early 2002, with the help of Britain and a large UN peace-keeping mission. Our interest and sense of responsibility, as the former colonial power, was clear. Some 50,000 had died in the war; 70,000 former

combatants were left by the time of the ceasefire in November 2000, and more than 17,000 foreign troops were involved in their disarmament. But the longer-term needs were immense, and over the past four years Britain has led the efforts to restore order and rebuild an effective Sierra Leonean state. The work has been carried out at four levels:

- At the military level, we have supported reform in the Army and the Ministry of Defence, while training 8,500 soldiers and absorbing a limited and carefully selected number of former fighters into the Army.
- At the civil level, initiatives have been launched in strengthening local governance and setting up an anti-corruption commission, and training and equipping a more accountable police force. We helped to set up a Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Special Court, and funded NGOs to provide essential services, especially in health, where government services had collapsed. The target was clear: to prepare for new elections in May 2002.



PHOTO - KITA PEDROZA / VIA RIC

In Brazil, people handed over 70,000 weapons in an arms collection campaign in 2004.

- At the regional level, a priority was to make it as hard as possible for warlords in Liberia to continue to destabilise the situation, while encouraging neighbouring West African countries to implement UN sanctions against Liberia, and to monitor any attempts to circumvent them via Burkina Faso or Togo. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), in particular, was seen as a key channel for brokering peace.
- At the international level, Sierra Leone had to be seen not as just a “British” issue, but as an international concern needing international funding and support.

Each of the UK ministries within the Africa Conflict Pool took on its own responsibilities, with DFID itself largely focusing on reintegrating former fighters into productive civilian life, improving standards of policing, and building capacity within government, especially at the Ministry of Defence. Sierra Leone still has a long way to go – but it now has some of the institutions to travel that route peacefully.

The international action to help Sierra Leone points to the importance of a shared and committed global approach to preventing conflict. The UK, for instance, has tough controls on the US\$28 billion a year small arms trade, and wants to see these controls become universal. We have one of the strictest and most transparent arms export licensing systems in the world, which we are now promoting worldwide, as we encourage the UN to secure international agreement on the need for tighter export and import controls, and as we back calls for an eventual international, legally-binding and comprehensive Arms Trade Treaty. That still leaves 640 million small arms in circulation: we have already supported the destruction of over 300,000 small arms and light weapons, and 30 million pieces of ammunition.

Reducing the harm caused by small arms will only work if people feel safe and secure enough to give up their weapons. That's why we are working closely with countries such as Sierra

Leone and Jamaica, to create a more secure environment for ordinary people. This involves helping the armed forces, the security services, the police – as well as the judiciary and even the parliament – to ensure that security is as effective as it is accountable, and that it truly responds to the needs of local people.

Multilateral efforts This country cannot, of course, tackle global insecurity alone; a stronger, more integrated international system of prevention and action is needed.

Aid funds should not be deflected into security programmes

The most important body for promoting global security is the United Nations. In 2004, the UK supported the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)'s Bureau of Crisis Prevention and Recovery, and conflict-related programmes within UNICEF and UNHCR. The December 2004 UN High-level Panel proposed action against a range of global threats, including poverty, infectious disease and environmental degradation, war and violence within states, the spread and use of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, terrorism, and trans-national organised crime. The Panel would like to see the establishment of a UN Peacebuilding Commission, and UN member states formally recognising a “collective international responsibility” to protect citizens in the event of any genocide or other large-scale killing. The UK stands right behind these recommendations – while strongly maintaining that aid funds should **not** be deflected into security programmes.

As well as a series of UK proposals for a stronger UN humanitarian system (not least the setting up of a \$1 billion UN fund to support humanitarian responses in neglected or newly emerging crises, with £100 million² of UK funds on the table as an initial contribution), the UK also strongly supports a strengthening of

the UN's peace-keeping capacity – its planning, its management and leadership, and the quality and quantity of its staffing. We spent £10 million last year in support of the UN's Global Conflict Prevention strategy.

Our international cooperation has also seen us working with the World Bank on the links between conflict and developing countries' strategies for reducing poverty. We hope that the results of this research project will lead us into further discussion with other international financing institutions, especially the IMF.

Meanwhile we are working with fellow European Union (EU) Member States to influence the European Security Strategy, and see that it sets out a coherent policy that recognises the links between security and development. We want to see all EU Member States, just as all UN Member States, agreeing on a common way of identifying and addressing the risks of state failure.

Our support for the EU is also practical. We have given special help to regional organisations such as the EU's Peace Facility for Africa, which finances the work of the African Union to build capacity for conflict management and peace support operations. This includes a UK commitment to train 17,000 African peace-keeping troops by 2010. Through the Africa Conflict Prevention Pool, the UK is also providing £12 million² for the African Union's peace support operation in Darfur, which is currently working hard to bring peace to that troubled region. Darfur stands as a stark reminder to us all, as to why we have to do better in the future. ■

The Right Honourable Hilary Benn, MP, is UK Secretary of State for International Development.

¹ See: www.dfid.gov.uk

² At 11 March 2005 exchange rates, 1 UK pound equalled 1.92434 US dollars.

An ounce of prevention, a stitch in time

Matthew Scott

PHOTO - RIKHARD FORBERG / WORLD VISION



Members of a militia in Somaliland

“AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION is worth a pound of cure” and “a stitch in time saves nine”... these two common-sense proverbs have yet to permeate the policies and practices of the principal global institution that is charged with saving “succeeding generations from the scourge of war”: the United Nations.

With expectations rising for the Millennium Review Summit at UN headquarters in September 2005 to solve all the world's toughest problems, the UN's 191 member states need urgently to implement the recommendations of several high-level UN reform panels if they wish to prevent future conflicts. Only radical changes to the way member states collectively manage conflict – especially in failing or failed states – can yield a UN that is more effective at preventing wars.

At least two proposals currently on the table hold the most promise for increasing the ability of the UN to

prevent violent conflict: a new “contract” for partnering with civil society in conflict prevention, and the establishment of a UN Peacebuilding Commission. Enacting reforms in both these areas will require a commitment to collective security by sovereign states as well as bureaucratic changes at the UN Secretariat. Foremost, however, the UN's constituent organs and its member states must collectively commit to a fundamental, paradigmatic shift: from conflict reaction to prevention.

A new deal with civil society

Two current initiatives promise stronger partnerships between civil society and the UN for the prevention of armed conflict. First, the upcoming conference of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) represents the culmination of three years of networking and documentation on the signal contribution of civil society in conflict prevention, and will propose new

models of interaction with governments and multi-lateral organisations to prevent violent conflicts in the coming years. Second, the watershed 2004 UN report on relations with civil society, *We the Peoples: Civil society, the United Nations and global governance*,¹ has made useful recommendations, particularly on Security Council reform, that could yield large gains for conflict prevention.

World Vision has invested significantly in the GPPAC movement and the July 2005 conference at UN headquarters, believing that a global civil society network on peace-building and conflict prevention is long overdue and deserves high-level UN engagement. World Vision staff have been involved in GPPAC regional meetings in Europe, East Africa, South-East Asia and North America, and are serving on the International Steering Group and the UN Conference team. Once the July conference is over, World Vision expects the GPPAC campaign to transform into a global movement mobilising political will to make conflict prevention “the new normal”. In the meantime, the Global Action Agenda to be presented by GPPAC's civil society members to the Secretary-General in July 2005 will contain numerous recommendations that fit very well with the UN's own current reform project.

The recommendations of the Secretary-General's Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations–Civil Society Relations represent one of the best intersection points with the GPPAC civil society process. Chaired by former Brazilian president Henrique Fernando Cardoso, the Panel recommended (among other things) reforms to the Security Council's interaction with civil society organisations – an emphasis that was featured in World Vision's own submission to the Cardoso panel.

The Security Council is clearly interested in civil society consultation: in 2004 the Council held a near-record four informal briefings with non-governmental organisations (NGOs). In June 2004, two NGOs even presented to a formal meeting of the Council, for the first time in the UN's history. In November 2004, the Council also interacted with local NGOs during its unprecedented Sudan summit in Nairobi. While they clearly fill a pressing need, these NGO briefings are usually *ad hoc*, hastily-organised affairs in New York, with opaque selection criteria and little opportunity for follow-up. In order to equip the Council to prevent conflicts effectively, these briefings need to be regularised and expanded, to allow regular consideration of conflicts not currently on the Council's agenda, and to occur whenever the Council travels on field missions. Member states will need to agree in September to implement the specific Cardoso panel recommendations on this matter, lest the Council continue to invent haphazard mechanisms to consult civil society.

Heed the experts, count the cost

The Security Council's hunger for more conflict analysis relates closely to the other main UN reform proposal under consideration here: the establishment of a UN Peacebuilding Commission, as articulated by the UN's High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. The Commission is clearly needed for better conflict prevention, but its mandate, capacity and scope all need to be ambitiously expanded and linked to progress against the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) if the Commission is to have any significant impact on conflict prevention.

The High-level Panel's recommendation to establish such a Peacebuilding Commission with a Support Office was prefaced by a fairly frank acknowledgment of the UN Secretariat's current deficiencies in preventing conflicts: "...there is no place in the United Nations system explicitly designed to avoid State collapse and the slide to war or to assist countries in their transition

from war to peace."² Despite this open admission of the UN Secretariat's weakness in peacebuilding and prevention, member states reluctant to expand UN bureaucracy have blocked previous proposals in 2000 that would have improved the UN's conflict analysis capacity.

Blocking the Peacebuilding Commission would be penny-wise but pound-foolish.

In a 2004 paper for the Copenhagen Consensus seminar, Oxford University's Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler systematically assessed the average annual global cost of civil war – counting reduced GDP, health effects, forced migration and other factors – as US\$128 billion.³ In the same study, Collier and Hoeffler determined that if a UN peace-keeping mission effectively ends one violent conflict for a ten-year period, it offers an 80-to-1 peace dividend. In crude terms, an ounce of prevention offers almost exactly five pounds of cure according to this measure.

Time is running out... the bracing winds of reform risk becoming a stale breeze

These staggering statistics rarely feature in Security Council discussions. What has featured of late is a so-called US\$5 billion "red line" on UN peace-keeping operations; Council members have voiced concern that so many peace-keepers will be deployed by 2006 that the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) will simply no longer have the management capacity to juggle its concurrent sixteen myriad and complex operations.

These frightening facts alone justify a Peacebuilding Support Office many times larger than the "about twenty or more" professional staff suggested in the High-level Panel's report. The facts also suggest that poverty reduction and social policy discussions are just as critical for conflict

prevention as the traditional conflict analyses or humanitarian data. A truly effective UN Peacebuilding Support Office, therefore, should draw staff from civil society, from international financial institutions, and from those with expertise in the impact of the private sector on conflict. Such an office – through the Peacebuilding Commission – should also regularly remind the Security Council and aid donor countries of the proven link between poverty and conflict.

Time is running out for member states and the UN Secretariat. The bracing winds of reform that have been blowing through the high-level UN reports of the last several years are in danger of becoming a stale breeze if member states are not prepared to act on the advice of the best experts that the UN has to offer. The UN Secretariat and member states together must make the paradigm shift to prevention, expand their conflict analysis capacities, acknowledge the link between poverty and violence, and find new ways of relating to civil society organisations. The poorest people on the planet – the "least of these" in religious parlance – are overwhelmingly the ones experiencing the scourge of war; they are counting on us. ■

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¹ See full report at: www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2004/04/0404128b.html

² A more secure world: Our shared responsibility, paragraph 26 I, www.un.org/secureworld/

³ P Collier and A Hoeffler, *The challenge of reducing the global incidence of civil war*, Copenhagen Consensus, April 2004.

www.copenhagenconsensus.com/DWSDownload.asp?File=Files%2FFiler%2FCC%2FPapers%2FConflicts%5F230404%2Epdf. The authors base the \$128b figure on detailed calculations showing that the national and regional costs of one civil war in a low-income country costs US\$64b and that on average two new civil wars start in low-income countries every year.

Eliminating the means of violence

Irene Khan

“The best strategy for prevention of armed conflict is to eliminate the means of violence.”

– Alpha Oumar Konaré,
former President of Mali

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, Oxfam and the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) are working together on the Control Arms campaign. One of the Campaign's key objectives is the acceptance and implementation of a global Arms Trade Treaty. This would be an historic contribution to conflict prevention.

The “war on terror” should have focused political will to prevent arms falling into the wrong hands. Instead, since the attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon on 11

September 2001, some suppliers have relaxed their controls in order to arm new-found allies against “terrorism”, irrespective of their disregard for international human rights and humanitarian law. Despite numerous draconian security measures introduced as part of this “war”, there is still no binding, comprehensive, international law to control the export of conventional arms.

Tools of death, part of life

At the same time, we are seeing a long-term change, as guns are becoming an integral part of life – and therefore an increasingly common instrument of death – in more communities and cities around the world. From the pastoralists of north-eastern Uganda to the gangs of Rio de

Janeiro, the carrying and use of increasingly lethal weaponry is becoming the norm.

Every government in the world has a responsibility to control arms – both their possession within its borders, to protect its own citizens, and their export across its borders, to ensure respect for international human rights and humanitarian law in the wider world.

The world's most powerful governments, who are also the world's biggest arms suppliers, have the greatest responsibility to control the global trade. The five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council – France, Russia, China, the UK and the USA – together account for 88% of the

PHOTO - KITTA PEHOZAVAVA RIO



March for a gun-free Brazil, on a Rio de Janeiro beach

world's conventional arms exports; and these exports contribute regularly to gross abuses of human rights.

Inter-linked action needed

The challenge to all governments is urgent. They must cooperate to control and limit the flow of arms and the spread of arms production. But to use the words of Olive Kobusingye, a surgeon treating victims of gun violence in Uganda, it is not enough **either** to mop the floor **or** to turn off the tap – both the trade in arms and safety at community level must be addressed. Thus it is vital for communities directly affected by such violence to cooperate in removing lethal weapons. To achieve this, women, men, and children must be given protection by legitimate security forces that respect human rights.

The 1997 Landmines Treaty¹ was brought into being by the combination of active governments and world-wide popular support. The same combination of public pressure and action by sympathetic governments is needed to secure an Arms Trade Treaty. Inter-linked action is urgently needed from community level to international level, to control arms proliferation and misuse more effectively.

At international level, an Arms Trade Treaty is needed to prevent arms being exported to destinations where they are likely to be used to commit grave violations of international human rights and humanitarian law.

At regional level, regional inter-governmental arms-control agreements need to be strengthened to uphold international human rights and humanitarian law.

At national level, states need to improve their own capacity and accountability to control arms transfers and protect citizens from armed violence, in line with international laws and standards.

At community level, civil society and local government agencies are urged to take effective action to improve safety at community level, by reducing local availability and demand for arms.



PHOTO - NIGEL HAIRSH / WORLD VISION

This boy in Burundi, at 14 years old, survived a savage gun attack that damaged his stomach and other organs.

A change of state policy and practice to control the flow and use of arms is vital to removing the threat of arms proliferation. A comprehensive system to regulate the arms trade and control arms transfers must include an international Arms Trade Treaty based on international human rights and humanitarian law, a global system for marking and tracing weapons, and a convention to control the activities of arms brokers which closes the international loopholes exploited by arms manufacturers, dealers, brokers and traffickers. ■

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¹Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines, and on their Destruction

Police reform and conflict prevention

Sonia Rai

INSECURITY IS THE GREATEST barrier to development for poor people in developing countries. That was the conclusion of the World Bank's *Voices of the Poor* report that interviewed thousands of local people across Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Yet in many countries the state and its security forces are unable or unwilling to protect citizens. Too often, the security sector has had a history of being a tool for repression – protecting the interests of the state rather than those of the population, particularly the poorest.

Not only does this inhibit development, but it also can fuel violent conflict as local communities take their security into their own hands. Providing safety, security and access to justice for poor people is therefore a priority for poverty reduction and peace-building.

The security sector includes those organisations that have authority to use or order the use of force, or the threat of force, to protect the state and its citizens, as well as those civil structures that are responsible for their management and oversight. It includes: military and paramilitary forces; intelligence services; police forces, both local and national; border guards and customs services; and judicial and penal systems.

Security sector reform projects, in pre- and post-conflict environments, can help bring about more positive and accountable security structures that meet the needs of society, and go a long way to bridging the gap between government and local people. Reform is not only important in societies that are at immediate risk of large-scale armed conflict but in all societies. Security sector reform should be recognised as an integral aspect of democratisation and of

government reform involving greater transparency and accountability.

Why police reform?

The police are gate-keepers to the criminal justice system in most developing countries, and the arm of the state that local people most frequently come into contact with. Unprofessional and unaccountable police and security forces can create mistrust within communities, and a corrupt and inefficient judicial system can deny people access to justice.

In many pre- and post-conflict countries, the distinction between police and military forces is sometimes blurred, with much higher priority given to state security or particular factions or groups, compared with areas such as crime prevention and investigation. In the vacuum created by inadequate policing, organised crime, vigilante groups, illicit arms and corruption flourish. In post-conflict countries, the police often have a history of human rights violations, and there may be a temptation for any incumbent regime to continue using the police in this way. With levels of crime detection by police forces often low, citizens and communities frequently take justice into their own hands.

Organised crime, vigilante groups, illicit arms and corruption flourish if policing is inadequate

The focus of security sector reform programmes for the police is to help turn them from a force that is feared into a service that is respected. The aim is to create a professional and accountable police service that works with local communities to help prevent crime and increase public

safety. Donor governments are increasingly realising that engaging with the security sector, and particularly with the police, has to be a vital focus of development programmes in many countries.

The challenge is to ensure that multi-lateral organisations and donor governments take a coherent approach to security sector reform, and develop participatory rather than repressive alternatives, to ensure that policing becomes more democratic, more accountable and more responsive to the needs of the public.

It is now widely accepted that to be effective, police reform programmes have to focus on improving service delivery to local communities. One such programme is underway in Kenya where the Government – supported by donors and international and local NGOs – is working to introduce “community-based policing” (see box).

Community-based policing in Kenya

Whilst Kenya is not a country in conflict, its citizens continue to suffer a disproportionate level of insecurity. Violent crime involving firearms is common in Kenya and is a significant cause of social and economic degeneration in poor communities. Insecurity was identified by many communities in the country's *Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper* as being the principal source of their poverty.¹ Poverty, lack of economic development, the spread of small arms, the lack of police capacity and distrust between police and communities fuel Kenya's high level of crime. Access to justice, safety and the right to live without fear is important for poor people living in deprived urban and rural communities.

After the electoral defeat of the Moi regime, the new Kenyan Government

came to power pledging to reform the police. Saferworld is working with the Government to help introduce community-based policing with the aim of transforming the culture of the Kenyan police, increasing their capacity, and improving police–community cooperation, in order to prevent crime, increase community safety and enhance economic development.

Pilot projects Two pilot project sites have been selected in Isiolo, a rural area prone to banditry and cattle raiding, and Kibera, the largest slum in Nairobi. The projects seek to maximise the impact of an overburdened and under-equipped police force, which has only one police officer for every 1000 people (the international norm is 1:500). The lack of police capacity has been compounded by a lack of awareness of the need for common action to tackle crime and the threat of illicit arms.

In Isiolo, an area that is occupied by pastoralists, the project brings together police and civil society partners who include local farmers, nomads, traders and community elders, together with high-level police and district officers, to develop local crime prevention and victim support strategies. For example, with the police very thinly spread and police stations distances apart, the simple introduction of a number of mobile phones has transformed people's ability to report crimes and engage with the police.

In Kibera, clearly identifiable “Drop Boxes” or mail-boxes have been introduced to the area to encourage people to send reports or tip-offs to the police. The community in Kibera has also set up a Community Police Forum comprising the police, civil society, tenants, landlords and other representatives of the area, who together have developed policies and plans to improve on the security of the area.

Police records in the area indicate a 30% drop in crime since the two pilot projects were launched in February 2003. The process is encouraging an understanding of law and order in a place where crime has traditionally

gone unreported in the assumption that nothing can or will be done. Community-based policing has proved to be a cost-effective and efficient way of achieving greater public confidence in the criminal justice system. In the words of Dave Mwangi, the former Permanent Secretary for Internal Security, Office of the President:

“[I]mproving relations between the police and the local community is a crucial aspect of reducing crime and increasing community safety. ... There is already evidence of a tangible improvement in policing and reduction in crime in areas where the project is being piloted.”²

Some fundamental principles of community-based policing are

- policing by consent, not coercion
- the police as part of the community, not apart from it
- police and community working together to find out what community needs are
- police, public and other agencies working together in partnership
- tailoring the business of policing to meet community needs
- the police being accountable for their business service

National policy initiatives In addition to the pilot site projects and in order to develop the concept across the country, Saferworld is also working with the police at the national level. The President has appointed a taskforce on police reform that is leading the process and a new national policy on community-based policing has been developed. This new policy underpins the reform process – because to many people, community policing previously had come to mean vigilantism. It makes clear that community-based policing is not about the community taking the law into its own hands, but rather about it working in partnership with the police to address local problems. A new training curriculum on

community-based policing has also been developed with the civil service training college – the Kenyan Institute of Administration. A series of training courses is provided for police officers and community leaders across the country. Training police and local people side-by-side helps break down the barriers that previously existed and encourages greater collaboration.

In addition, the Kenyan National Focal Point on small arms – an inter-departmental coordinating body – has also been revitalised and given a wider mandate including community-based policing and peace-building. Research findings on community policing by the “Safer Cities” programme of United Nations Habitat and the Kenyan Government have led to a Nairobi Crime Prevention strategy. In 2004 a week-long convention on crime prevention, supported by UN Habitat, the Nairobi City Council, the Kenya Police, NGOs and others, was held in Nairobi.

Of course, reforming the police is a long-term process and there is still a long way to go in Kenya. However, there are encouraging signs that change is beginning to take root. Engaging with the police is often a difficult challenge for local communities and development organisations, but it is one that must be faced. Transforming the security sector and fostering respect for human rights are critical to the long-term success of peace agreements, and a key intervention to promote sustainable peace and development. ■

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¹ *Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper for the period 2001–2004 prepared by the people and Government of Kenya*, June 2001, p 17

² Quoted in Saferworld's *Annual Report*, April 2002–March 2003

PEOPLE BUILDING PEACE

The Women in Peacebuilding Network in Liberia and the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict

Ana Cutter Patel



PHOTO: N. MACAULAY PANKUE / WORLD VISION

Liberian women celebrating

IN EARLY 2003 IN LIBERIA, AS rebel forces seeking to oust President Charles Taylor advanced on the capital city Monrovia, Christian and Muslim women dressed in white gathered daily to pray together at the airfield, chanting a message that soon became a universal mantra and song: “We Want Peace, No More War”.

The women were part of the Liberia branch of the Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET), an initiative established in 2001 by the West African Network for Peacebuilding.¹ WIPNET is also one of thousands of non-governmental and civil society organisations around the world that make up the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) – an international network of organisations committed to conflict

prevention and peace-building. GPPAC is developing a civil society action agenda on preventing conflict that will be launched at the United Nations at an international conference in July 2005. The story of WIPNET is one of 65 stories that GPPAC has gathered in a forthcoming book, *People building peace: 65 inspiring stories*.

“In the past we were silent”

The objective of WIPNET is to build the capacity of women to contribute to formal peace processes and decision-making in the region. WIPNET began its work by developing and conducting trainings, establishing national networks, organising conferences and conducting research. By 2003, WIPNET-Liberia had a substantial network of community-

based women’s groups. These groups had organised in the context of a decade of war – war that claimed more than 200,000 lives and displaced 1.5 million people.

Confronting the renewed violence in their country, the women of WIPNET-Liberia decided it was time to act. Determined to end the conflict, the women sent a public statement to all the parties: “In the past we were silent, but after being killed, raped, dehumanised, and infected with diseases, and watching our children and families destroyed, war has taught us that the future lies in saying NO to violence and YES to peace! We will not relent until peace prevails.”

In April 2003, they began a daily sit-in for peace on the Monrovia airfield next to the main road leading into the city. The sit-in united women from different religions, socio-economic backgrounds and political affiliations, and was the beginning of a campaign to end the war in Liberia. Women’s groups, under the auspices of WIPNET, also generated a mass peace rally, and wrote petitions to the President and the rebels demanding an unconditional ceasefire and dialogue. They learned to use the media to effectively communicate their message: “We Want Peace, No More War.”

Eventually their efforts paid off. The group received an audience with the President and a seat as official observers at the Liberia peace talks in Ghana. When the peace talks threatened to stall, the women of WIPNET-Liberia went into action once more, physically blockading the

IN AFRICA, AND BEYOND



door and refusing to let the men leave the negotiation table until all – the mediators, the warriors and the politicians – committed to reaching an agreement.

In August 2003, Charles Taylor resigned from the presidency and the UN agreed to send a substantial peace-keeping force. The women of WIPNET then played an important role in the transitional government – including members ascending to posts in the National Human Rights Commission of Liberia and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. One member of WIPNET, Una Kumba Thompson, was named Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. The group continued its daily presence at the airfield as a reminder that women were “watching the peace”.

A new global partnership

Around the world, civil society organisations like WIPNET are succeeding in preventing and ending armed conflict. Yet despite their enormous contribution, these organisations are often marginalised in formal prevention and peace-building activities.

When peace talks faltered, the women refused to let the men leave the negotiating table

The nature of conflict today, increasingly understood as transnational war networks, can only be countered with an equally strong peace network – a network in which civil society is recognised as an essential partner.

This is the central message of GPPAC, which is mobilising a vast array of organisations working in conflict

prevention and peace-building to raise awareness of civil society contributions to peace, to develop a civil society action agenda, and to advocate for national, regional and global commitment to implement that agenda – which includes strategies for an improved relationship with the United Nations and the development of a series of Peace and Security Goals.

It is to this end that some 1,000 peace builders will gather for the GPPAC conference *From reaction to prevention: Civil society forging partnerships to prevent violent conflict and build peace*, from 19–21 July at the United Nations in New York. Already six regional conferences and one regional consultation have resulted in seven regional action agendas, and the International Steering Group of GPPAC has begun integrating the regional agendas into one global agenda for the July conference.

The ultimate goal is a shift: from reaction to armed conflict, to preven-

tion of armed conflict. The GPPAC process – regional conferences to develop regional agendas for an international conference – is a way of identifying the steps needed to realise that shift. It is also an unparalleled opportunity to recognise and scale up the critical contribution of groups like WIPNET. **People build peace. ■**

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¹ This story of WIPNET is a synopsis of the chapter “Women’s peace activism in West Africa: The WIPNET experience” by Thelma Arimiebi Ekiyor, director of Programmes of the West African Network for Peacebuilding. The chapter appears in *People building peace II: 65 inspiring stories*, edited by P. von Tongeren, M Brenk, M Hellema and J Verhoeven, (Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, June 2005). See: www.gppac.net/documents/book_promotion.pdf



PHOTO: AMY TURNER / WORLD VISION

Women, often the first to suffer from violent conflict, have played a critical role in building peace in Liberia.

Conflict prevention and peace-building in East and Central Africa – a shared responsibility

Florence Mpaanyi

PHOTO - ELEN ERICSON KUUP / WORLD VISION



This woman leads former warriors of two rival tribes in a symbolic march for peace in Kenya. Sticks and peace chants replace guns and calls to raid.

IN THE LAST 10 YEARS, THE eastern and central regions of Africa¹ have experienced great turmoil – accentuated by the Rwandan genocide of 1994, and the recent war in the Democratic Republic of Congo that saw eight African states involved in the same conflict. The wars experienced in these regions have brought untold suffering, with many lives lost, people maimed, raped and displaced.

Clearly, the resort to military solutions has led to instability in most states of the region, marked by absence of democratic values or good governance. This suggests the need to design processes that will promote responsible citizenry and leadership that encompasses issues of justice; healing of the traumatic past as seen in the current truth and reconciliation commissions; disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of former combatants including child soldiers; post-conflict reconstruction to foster economic recovery; and respect for human rights and dignity.

Yet there are positive changes that have offered hopeful prospects for the

region. The formation of the African Union spells hope for the continent of Africa, as does the implementation of the Peer Review Mechanism of heads of states under the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). At the regional level, the involvements of key bodies – such as the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in the eastern or Horn of Africa regions, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in southern and central Africa, and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in western Africa – in peace-making and peace-keeping are encouraging signs of the search for peaceful co-existence. Indeed, in early 2005, through the efforts of IGAD, both Sudan and Somalia have signed new peace agreements.

Civil society building peace

The search for peace in central and eastern Africa is not confined to state actors. Numerous civil society groups – such as non-governmental organisations, community-based organisations, religious leaders, women and youth groups, academics, practitioners and traditional leaders

– have been making a vital contribution towards peace in their respective countries. As the United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Africa noted:

“Civil society organisations have emerged from the 20th century as key players in the effort to prevent, mitigate and resolve armed conflict in Africa. Their rise to prominence has paralleled the increase of intra-state conflict in Africa, and the inability of national regimes to maintain peace...”²

However, stronger partnerships among all actors – civil society, governments, regional bodies and the United Nations – are paramount to achieving the fundamental gains that will sustain peace in the region.

Depending on the nature and magnitude of the conflict, and on their own mandates, capacities and comparative advantages, civil society peace actors apply a variety of approaches – from community-based peace initiatives to policy change at national and regional level – to prevent conflict and build peace.

Rural Women Peace Link, Kenya

One commendable example in the region is the work being carried out by the Rural Women Peace Link (RWPL) in Kenya. RWPL is a network of rural women peace workers from areas in western Kenya that have been experiencing violence. The initiative grew from a peace programme of the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK),³ based in Eldoret. Despite the involvement of women in that programme's peace-building activities, there was a sense that their specific needs were not being adequately addressed. Exclusion of women from community decision-making processes reinforced their

vulnerability in situations of ethnic conflict, economic hardship, socio-cultural exploitation and political manipulation. Ms Selline Korir, Coordinator of RWPL, shared with me that women in this region are involved in peace work because of:

“...the violent experiences that [they] have been going through both at the domestic and community level. It is our belief and conviction that women have a responsibility to reduce violence and conflicts at all levels and to offer a vision for the future in which violent conflicts are ... minimised [and] the major potential causes of violence are addressed and resolved.”

In fulfilling this vision, RWPL has designed a women's empowerment programme that facilitates women being active at community level to overcome violence. Another RWPL activity to enhance peace in western Kenya was a campaign on peaceful elections during Kenya's General Elections in 2002. (The 1992 and 1997 elections had been preceded and followed by ethnic or partisan violence, fuelled by politicians' inflammatory statements; in the 1992 violence an estimated 1,500 Kenyans died and up to 250,000 were displaced.) RWPL, in collaboration with other civil society groups, campaigned to prevent election-related violence – a campaign that was replicated by other groups in different parts of Kenya. Indeed, some RWPL members were elected civic leaders.

Growing recognition

The RWPL initiative is a good example of how community-based CSOs are able to influence communities in conflict due to their proximity and an understanding of the context. Despite cultural barriers due to gender, RWPL has earned respect and credibility among the men for its commitment, persistence and openness to partner with men in seeking solutions. The International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (IC/GLR) that took place in Dar-Es-Salaam, Tanzania, in November 2004 was a landmark event in

collaborative and collective response to issues of peace and security. As part of the preparations for the IC/GLR and subsequent heads-of-state meetings, is a parallel process involving civil society organisations and groups. This aims to capture views from civil society that will be integrated into the ongoing deliberations and declarations. The UN's recognition of and invitation to civil society in this process is certainly a move in the right direction and reflects the UN's founding ideal of representing everyone. It also emphasises the legitimacy of civil society in contributing to peace and security and opens new avenues for government–civil society interaction. As the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations–Civil Society Relations stated:⁴

“The growing influence of civil society in global policy does not diminish the relevance of inter-governmental processes – it enhances it. ... While civil society can help to put issues on the global agenda, only Governments have the power to decide on them. But... many prominent issues of our time have been advanced and shaped by civil society, propelled by the power of public opinion. Consider gender relations, human rights, the environment, AIDS treatments, child soldiers, debt relief and landmines. Consider too the powerful synergies of like-minded groupings of State and civil society actors working together [which make] such forums more relevant, reducing the democratic deficits to which they are prone. Civil society can also promote actions to advance globally agreed priorities...”

Multi-faceted and holistic

Peace-building, as John Paul Lederach suggests, requires a process of **building** – which involves investment and materials, architectural design and coordination of labour, laying of a foundation, and detailed finish work, as well as continuing maintenance.⁵ Conflict prevention is understood to refer to “measures and actions

aimed at ensuring that violent conflict does not occur, recur or intensify. These include both measures addressed directly to specific threats of violence, and measures intended to fundamentally transform the conditions that give rise to violent conflict.”⁶ The search for durable peace, therefore, has to be **holistic**. It has to include both short-term (operational) and long-term (structural) preventive measures. Conflict prevention and peace-building have to include activities that advance respect for human rights, good governance and democracy, human security, poverty reduction, gender equity, environmental preservation, and good health for all. Among the activities and measures that need to be put in place are stronger partnerships among the world's citizens, irrespective of the “institutions” they represent.

A “more secure world”, as amplified in the report of the UN High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, is indeed a **shared responsibility**. ■

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¹ This article reflects learnings from NPI-Africa's interactions with civil society in eastern and central Africa, in the context of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict programme – a civil society-led process initiated in 2002 to generate and build a new international consensus on peace-building and preventing violent conflict.

² *Assessing the role of civil society in the prevention of armed conflict in Africa*, United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA), June 2004

³ The National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) is a fellowship of churches and Christian organisations. Founded in 1913, it has been deeply concerned with peace matters since its early work on rehabilitation of the African troops who had returned from the First World War. See: www.nccck.org.

⁴ From *We the Peoples: Civil society, the United Nations and global governance*, June 2004, A/58/817

⁵ J.P. Lederach, *Building peace: Sustainable reconciliation in divided societies*, USIP Press, Washington, 1977

⁶ From *10 Recommendations to the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region from the Eastern and Central Africa Regional Conference on the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict*. The full text is available at: www.npi-africa.org, click on “Publications”

Transforming Arms into Tools – a humanitarian approach to voluntary disarmament

Ekkehard Forberg

HUMANITARIAN AGENCIES should become more involved in the protection of civilians. One way of doing so is to focus on the tools of violence. Most of the violent deaths in today's conflict areas are caused by small arms – such as pistols, assault rifles, small and medium-sized machine guns, and grenades.

Surprisingly, nearly 60% of the world's estimated 639 million weapons are in civilian hands. Small weapons are therefore not only a threat during conflict itself, but – because they circulate throughout entire regions – pose a danger to the civilian population even after the conflict has ended.

In many former conflict areas, many or most people still possess a weapon. Weapons are a danger to children and women in the home, since they are often not securely stored away. Interviews this author has conducted in Somali hospitals revealed a high number of gun-shot wounds caused by accidents.¹ People are especially at risk if they feel excluded from the transitional process of rebuilding their society, become frustrated, and resort back to violence.

Everybody “his own policeman”

Others, needing to care for their families but without access to employment opportunities, look for ways to put their weapons to (bad) use. In post-conflict societies this often results in road blocks and other “income-generating activities” being carried out with the weapons they were allowed to keep. Protracted “violence markets” emerge, where violent behaviour becomes a foundational element of the economic system. One symptom of this is the increasing privatisation of security – or to quote Garaad Abshir, the chief of Las Anod (Somaliland): “Nowadays,

everybody is his own policeman.” But why is it that in countries of conflict and turmoil, not only militias but even ordinary people turn to automatic weapons?

One reason is the easy availability – especially in Africa. Small weapons can easily be hidden and be smuggled to other areas by donkey or camel. They are long-lasting, and even if they become worn out, almost any part of the gun can be replaced by a dealer or repaired by a local weapons workshop. And they are usually cheap: depending on market conditions (demand and supply), they cost between US\$50 and 200 – equal to one to four cows, the common rate in rural East Africa. Finally and importantly, they are easy to handle: anybody can use a *Kalashnikov*² without military training.

Mozambique's success in ridding itself of weapons is due to courageous civil leaders

Weapons are hazardous. Not just in the hands of children and “bad guys”, but in and of themselves: the more of them exist and the easier they can be accessed, the more probable their lethal use. That's why there is no reasonable alternative to a systematic disarmament of combatants and armed civilians.

Mozambique: civil society making a difference

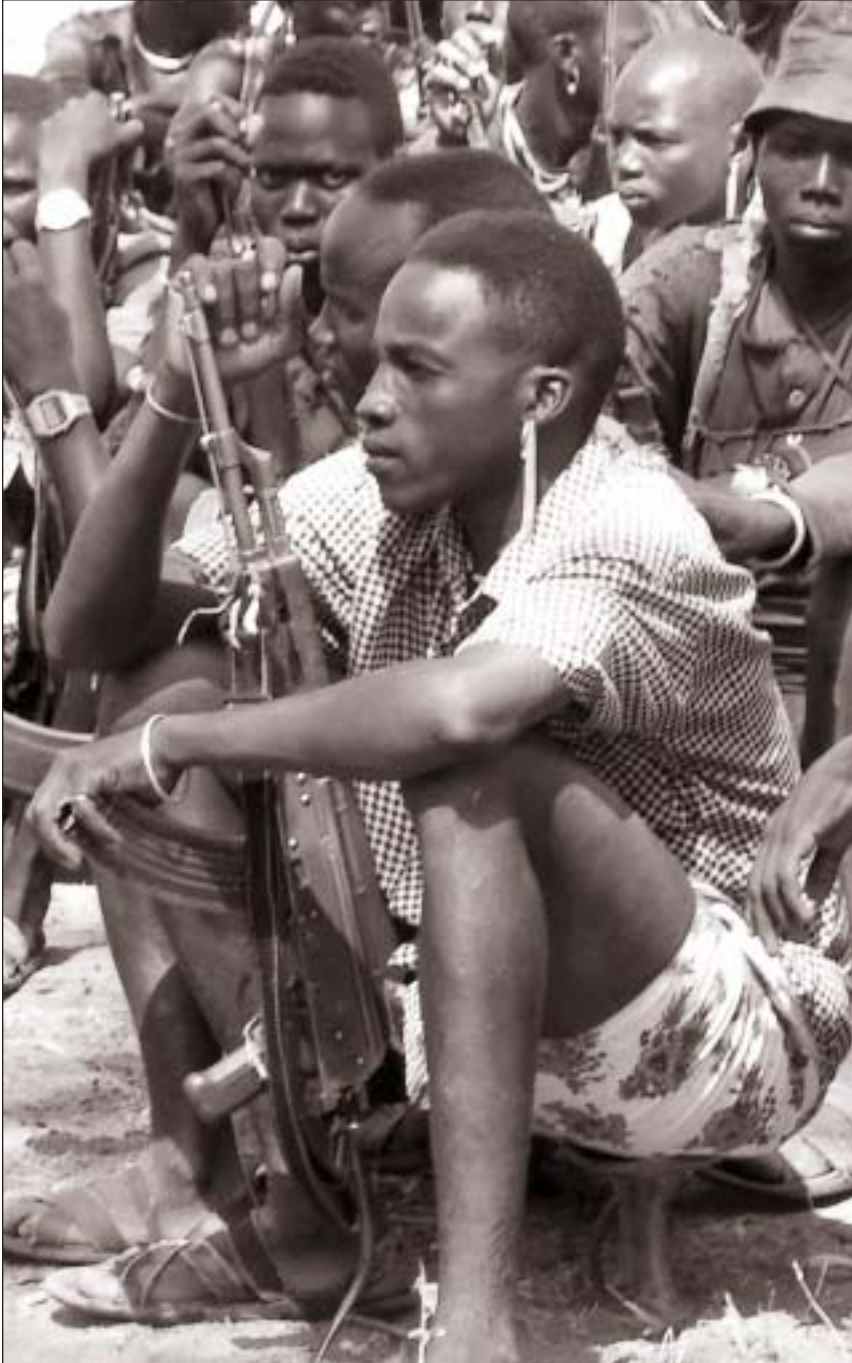
The Tools for Arms (in Portuguese, *Transformando Armas em Enxadas* or TAE) approach in Mozambique is a case in point. During Mozambique's civil war, millions of automatic weapons were distributed all over the country and amongst the people.³

Through the TAE project, for the very first time, civil society is taking responsibility for the population's disarmament at a national level, thereby making an essential contribution towards peace and reconciliation.

Meanwhile, the Christian Council of Mozambique is collecting at least some of those weapons and destroying them on the spot. Some weapon parts are then modelled into works of art, demonstrating to the people that such killing devices are no longer needed. Project components of this programme are:

- retrieving information, collecting weapons and ammunition, and destruction of weapons on the spot (a lorry with a work bench is used for that purpose);
- providing tools and other items, such as bicycles, sewing machines and tool kits, in return for handed-over weapons;
- civil education (workshops within the communities of beneficiaries); and
- transforming collected arms into art – the sale of which provides funds for the project.

The successful effort in Mozambique to rid society of its weapons must be attributed to the courageous commitment of individual civil leaders. One of them is Bishop Sengulane, who has been a major player in Mozambique's peace process and who also initiated this project. Sengulane built on the excellent reputation and trust that the Christian Council of Mozambique had earned through its role in a successful conflict resolution. An exceptional advantage was that the Council's engagement was seen as neutral with respect to the



Members of a pastoralist militia in Kenya

conflicting parties and the government structures. Also, the project has a close proximity and easy access to the people.

Between October 1995 and October 2003, the project was able to collect a total of 7,850 weapons, 5,964 pieces of unexploded ordnance (such as mines and grenades of various types) and 256,537 rounds of ammunition.

Without doubt, the Mozambique disarmament project has learnt from the experiences of previous – often failed – disarmament projects. So-called “buy-back” programmes, in which weapons were bought back at their actual market value, have in the past actually boosted the arms trade of a whole region. Instead, in Mozambique, useful household tools are offered as incentives for people to

hand in their weapons, thereby offering them new civil income opportunities. Consumer goods given in exchange for arms – mostly sewing machines and bicycles – are symbols of a new beginning. The Mozambique disarmament process is accompanied by training and awareness programmes to equip people to live in peacetime and to resolve future conflicts in a non-violent way.

Preconditions for success

There are some critical preconditions for civil society organisations to get involved in voluntary disarmament and to make disarmament a success:

Understanding why people want arms

The single most important factor is how well the programme understands why people want to be armed. If security conditions are not favourable, people will retain their weaponry as a “life insurance policy” just in case political reconciliation fails, or to defend their families and property against criminals. Another motivation for arms possession might be a cultural attribute (or “status symbol”) of the male gender role. Or, it can be a sign of prestige. Another reason for people to keep a weapon is the simple fact that it is a valuable asset: a “nest egg” for times of want. Besides their material value, weapons also have their ideological appeal and their aura of “power”. Or nostalgia: former combatants are known to only reluctantly relinquish their “companion” of many years.

Legal basis supported by state authorities

The government needs to create the legal ground-work to allow for weapons to be collected, transported, stored and destroyed. Provision is needed for those who possessed weapons illegally and who shun the risk of being prosecuted. Gun holders usually fear detection by the police, so the programme needs a clear legal basis such as a local amnesty during the collection period for all weapons holders turning in their guns.

Punishment The government could assist collection efforts by outlining clear and uncompromising penalties against holders of illicit weapons after



One of the sculptures made from decommissioned weapons in Mozambique

the collection and amnesty period has ended.

Non-existence of a local black market for military weapons

Where such a market is in existence and accessible, and as long a strong demand keeps the market price high, gun holders are much less likely to exchange their weapons for a used bicycle.

Attractive incentives To access large stocks of arms, the choice of tools to be exchanged for weapons has to be flexible. The TAE project introduced zinc roof sheets as an artificial currency, since people controlling caches of military ordnance frequently demand payment in cash (often because they need to pay off several people such as former combatants).

Assistance for storage and destruction The government, especially the police, should give assistance with the proper and safe storage of weapons handed in, and for the destruction of ammunition and unexploded ordnance. However, the police should not interfere with the process of retrieving information about weapons, with the negotiation about the number and kind of useful exchange goods, nor with the exchange itself.

Towards replication

In 2004, World Vision, in collaboration with Bonn International Centre for Conversion, has documented the Mozambique TAE initiative.⁴ One objective of this research was to look into the preconditions for such a success story to be replicated in

other countries. A potential disarmament project should learn from Mozambique's successful example, but should be country-specific and tailored to the specific nature of the conflict and the cultural setting.

For example, World Vision investigated whether such a project would be feasible in the current situation in Angola. However, the local authorities were not in favour. The disarmament of the population remains subject to political decisions beyond the influence of civil society organisations. If the intention does not meet the interest of the respective administration, it is likely to be futile for a civil society organisation to get involved in disarmament. Meanwhile, the Government of Guatemala has put in place the legal preconditions for disarmament (temporary amnesty for the surrender of weapons).

Hopefully, the major lesson learned from the Mozambique experience will be taken seriously: in the context of a successful peace process and in the absence of widespread ordinary crime, voluntary disarmament can be an effective tool in stabilising a post-conflict society. ■

Mr Ekkehard Forberg is Coordinator of Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution for World Vision Germany.

¹ See: E Forberg and U Terlinden, *Small arms in Somaliland: Their role and diffusion*, BITS, Berlin, 1999. Available at: www.bits.de/public/pdf/tr99-1.pdf

² Also referred to as the AK-47, admitted for use in the Red Army in 1947, it is produced in a lot of different types.

³ Mozambique is a country of some 16 million people. After the peace accord in 1992, some 6 to 7.5 million AK-47s were believed to have been circulating (or stored in caches) – the majority with the civilian population.

⁴ See: *Exchanging Guns for Tools: The TAE approach to practical disarmament. An assessment of the TAE project in Mozambique*, Brief 29, BICC, Bonn, 2004. Available at: www.justice-and-peace.org in English and in Portuguese.

Breaking the grip of hatred and violence in Kosovo

Rick Spruyt

SITUATED AT THE CENTRE OF the Balkan Peninsula, Kosovo borders Macedonia, Albania, Serbia and Montenegro, and is made up of 30 municipalities. Its recent history has been marred by hatred and xenophobia exacerbated by the war of 1998–99. This, combined with more than four decades under an authoritarian system, has denied citizens of the poorest region of the former Yugoslavia, especially the ethnic minorities, involvement in participation in public life.

Promoting peace in this tiny province is a primary activity of World Vision Kosovo. Inspired by the vision of an 11-year old Kosovar Albanian girl, its objectives are simple: to promote respect for all people, regardless of faith, tradition, gender, race or ethnic background. For most, this is an arduous task in a region so irrevocably associated with unrest, and a hatred the depth and breadth of which is almost incomprehensible to any mind not incubated in these environments.

This hatred, rooted in centuries of clashes, has formed an ethnic “pressure cooker” where every incident builds upon the last, breeding licence for present and future retribution. The situation is erratic and violence can quickly escalate. In March 2004, after five years of relative calm in Kosovo since the end of the war, rumours that three Albanian children had been drowned by Serb youths led to violent clashes between ethnic groups, resulting in the “ethnic cleansing” of entire villages and destruction of (Serb) Orthodox monasteries and churches across the province.

The incident left 19 people dead, nearly 900 injured and roughly 4,500 people displaced.¹ It underscored the importance of enabling the people of Kosovo to improve inter-ethnic

relations as a means to developing lasting stability.

Mitrovica's Council for Peace and Tolerance

Promoting peace in the ethnically broken society of Kosovo is profoundly difficult, and World Vision has secured its achievements through strong relationships developed with local communities and their leaders.

The conflict “hot-spot” in Kosovo is Mitrovica, a city divided by ethnic tensions since the end of the conflict in 1999. Segregated by the river Ibar, around 90,000 Albanians occupy the south of the river while the north bank is home to an estimated 20,000 Serbs. Additional ethnic minority groups (i.e. Bosnians, Ashkali, Roma and Turks) reside amongst both groups. French KFOR² troops maintain security check-points at the ironically-named “Friendship Bridge”, keeping ethnic groups apart.

World Vision began its peace-building work in Kosovo in October 2000, with the founding of the Council for Peace and Tolerance (CPT). As the only group of its kind in Mitrovica, this voluntary association comprises 19 citizens, representing three religious affiliations (Orthodox, Muslim and Catholic) and the five ethnic groups that constitute the social fabric of the city.

Group members set aside ethnic differences to collectively promote and build values of trust, security and enhanced quality of life for all citizens – “firstly by modelling those values as a group and by publicly calling on others to do the same”, as CPT President Nexhat Ugljanin, a Bosnian citizen and political representative of the Bosnian population of Mitrovica, put it.

Exactly one year after its inception, the CPT attended a strategic planning workshop sponsored and facilitated



A meeting at a secured venue during the beginning phase of the CPT's existence

PHOTO: WORLD VISION KOSOVO

by World Vision and hosted by Moral Re-Armament in Caux, Switzerland. The Council subsequently organised civic education seminars and multi-ethnic children's outreaches, establishing communication links between ethnic groups and forming ties with NATO, the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and a number of local and international NGOs. A CPT member presented the Council's work at a United Nations peace conference in New York in September 2002. The CPT went on to successfully launch its first advocacy project entitled the "Mitrovica Week of Peace", which culminated on the UN International Day of Peace (21 September 2003); they repeated this activity in September 2004 and have begun preparations for the same project this year.

The CPT is now a locally-registered NGO and has assumed self-leadership, with ongoing support from World Vision Kosovo staff. It continues to mobilise the community and promote values aimed at building confidence between Mitrovica's ethnic groups. Based on the success of the CPT, World Vision is implementing similar multi-ethnic projects around Kosovo to develop and strengthen civil society, build confidence and promote active participation of minority groups in public life.

Children of Kosovo campaign for peace

In a region where ethnic diversity and ethnic conflict go hand-in-hand, a vital goal of World Vision is to combat the stereotyping and dehumanising of people groups. With 30% of its 1.9 million inhabitants under the age of 16, Kosovo is a young and emerging society.³ Thus, a major challenge in World Vision's peace-building efforts is to reach this demographic force who will play a serious role in any future social progress.

Our response is the "Kids for Peace" programme, established to reverse common misconceptions and to promote peace and understanding among school children across the province.

Shortly after the war in 1999, World Vision reconstructed houses and provided basic needs for internally displaced people – such as the Feka family. Like countless others, the Fekas had not only watched their home being destroyed but were (and still are) missing a son and a daughter. One of their remaining eight children, Fatmire (then 11 years old), was mentored by World Vision staff and is now a 16 year-old champion for peace and healing among her peers. Her aim is to avert in her generation the manifestation of hatred that is ingrained in the majority of adults. Fatmire's vision of clubs for children from all ethnic groups materialised as the World Vision Kids for Peace programme in September 2002. The clubs are run by young people and facilitate interaction among children, helping them understand the gravity of the problems dividing their communities, in order to plan and implement change and to instil hope and vision for a better future. The project has rapidly expanded to 14 clubs, with a total of 362 children aged from 10 to 15.

World Vision's goal is to combat the stereotyping and dehumanising of people groups

In partnership with the Eagle Down Foundation,⁴ World Vision Kosovo and World Vision Bosnia ran a summer camp in neighbouring Montenegro involving Kids for Peace club members. The event consisted of workshops and games introducing the children to concepts of identity, tolerance, differences and similarities, peace education and strategic planning. It brought together Serb and Albanian young people from Kosovo and Bosnia – learning each other's traditions, sharing experiences and struggling happily to communicate in each other's languages.

The children initiated and planned several strategic activities, one of which was the Kosovo Cleaning Day, implemented by the Kids for Peace clubs on 9 October 2004. Local media

covered the event while UNMIK police and Danish KFOR troops provided security and logistical support, as 362 children cleared the rubbish littering their local streets. The children presented a petition to the provincial government to make stronger efforts to enforce environmental regulations in Kosovo.

While children witness xenophobia first-hand in their own villages, schools and households, the Kids for Peace clubs offer an alternative. They teach the consequences of violence and expand the range of choices for dealing with conflict in non-violent ways.

By broadening their world views and being equipped with problem-solving tools, these children have the chance to adopt an attitude of not tolerating intolerance. Adults who have responded to the message of Mitrovica's CPT and similar multi-ethnic initiatives across the province are on a similar journey. It is too early to assess the long-term impact of these peace- and tolerance-building programmes in Kosovo, and the forces of hatred, xenophobia and conflict are still powerful, but the potential – especially with wide replication – is exciting. ■

Mr Rick Spruyt is Civil Society Programme Manager with World Vision Kosovo.

¹ *Collapse in Kosovo*, International Crisis Group (ICG) report No. 155 (22 April 2004), p 2

² The Kosovo Force of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation)

³ According to estimates from the Statistical Office of Kosovo (www.sok-kosovo.org)

⁴ Eagle Down Foundation (www.eagledown.org) is a fund set up by the former World Vision Peacebuilding Project Manager, Mr Rudy Scholaert, to support children's peace-building movements.

Learning from communities that prevent conflict

Marshall Wallace

PEOPLE ARE NOT COMMITTED to war. Even in the midst of terrible conflicts that seem to sweep up entire countries or regions, there are often communities that exempt themselves – successfully – from the violence and the modes of the conflict around them.

The Steps Toward Conflict Prevention Project (STEPS) is a collaborative learning project doing case studies on these communities, looking for common themes among the strategies they employ, at how they succeed and why they fail. In early 2005, a group of humanitarian workers, peace workers and academics gathered in Cambridge, Massachusetts, to discuss these issues and these communities through the lens of ten cases that they had written.

The cases look at communities that have developed successful and coherent strategies for avoiding conflict. This does not mean that violence does not come to these communities, nor that they themselves avoid all participation in violence. But they are communities that have taken a conscious and articulated stand with regard to their particular conflict that they will not participate in its modes and mind-sets.

STEPS is still in its early stages, still pulling together evidence, and still gathering the common threads from among the cases. The recent consultation marked a learning point along the way and identified some elements that are important in all these communities. A few of these are described below.

Identity

Identity and the ways in which communities employ it to create cohesion are seen as overarching themes of all the cases. Identity is a large issue and consists of many elements; indeed, each of us has many



PHOTO - JON WARREN/WORLD VISION

Some "peace communities" in Colombia seek to resist a culture of violence.

identities. The challenge for STEPS is to examine the identities at work in a community, and to see how they are deployed by that community in the service of local actions to prevent the conflict.

What seems to happen in the STEPS communities is that they make a conscious choice about which identity to emphasise. In "this conflict" and in "this place", they choose to emphasise an identity (or identities) that leads them away from active involvement in the violence. Often these identities are not new ones, but build upon one of the range of possible identities already existing. Further, they are expressly chosen as part of a strategy for avoiding the conflict.

There are two main ways that communities express this choice.

The first is through consolidating an identity around a particular issue that leads them to avoid the purpose of the conflict that surrounds them. For example, the city of Tuzla in Bosnia avoided the ethnic cleansing that characterised the war in the Balkans in part through a strong emphasis on being Tuzlan. The Tuzlan identity superseded ethnic identity and gave people the opportunity to find connections rather than concentrate on divisions.

The second way communities consolidate an identity is to be explicitly against the violence. This is

characteristic of “peace villages” in Colombia, where their identity is forged around an explicit rejection of and resistance to the violent modes of interaction by armies and guerrilla groups in that country.

In most of the STEPS cases, a very interesting and strong characteristic of the identities chosen is that they are explicitly ethical in nature. The ethics being expressed deny the validity of the particular conflict from which they are exempting themselves. (We should emphasise that these communities do not eschew all violence or all wars, but that, for whatever reason, they do not believe in the one raging at present around them.)

It is not always possible for a group to pick its own identity. Some identities are built up out of social interactions and reactions to society. An example of this is social or geographical marginalisation (though geographical marginalisation is often a result of social marginalisation). But just because groups have relocated themselves to the edge of a conflict is no sure guarantee that the conflict will not sweep them up; marginalisation can be a part of an identity strategy, but is no guarantee.

For example, the Muslim community in Rwanda shares the ethnic demographic of the rest of the country, but Hutu Muslims largely did not participate in the genocide. Their identity as Muslims had sidelined them in that society over many years, and this reality offered an opportunity to choose another mode of living in the face of pressures to commit violence.

Internal cohesion

Communities in the STEPS cases do not always avoid violence or conflict.

The violence quite often has a direct impact on them. Yet they avoid engagement in it, and manage to persist in this exemption for long periods of time. How do these communities maintain their coherence in the face of extreme pressure to engage in the conflict? Three strong and inter-related factors have shown up in the case studies.

Communities choose an identity that leads them away from involvement in the violence

First, the communities generally have strong relationships between the leadership and the rest of the community. Further, the communication between leadership and community is two-way and constant. No one feels out of the loop of communication and decision-making.

Second, communities make use of powerful local symbolism. The symbolism usually emphasises the historical and ongoing identity of the community, and is repeatedly applied as a part of everyday experience.

Third, communities put brakes on their extremists and do not permit the modes of the conflict to become a factor in their midst. In this way, the strategic planning of these communities emphasises practical and pragmatic approaches rather than ideological strategies. This reflects their recognition that ideologically-driven behaviour tends to promote extreme views.

A district in Ghazni province, Afghanistan, provides an example of these three strategies for maintaining

internal cohesion. This community avoided much of the violence associated with the Taliban through a combination of these three points. The local decision-making structures, deeply rooted and respected in the culture, became strategic planning groups and involved nearly everybody. Options for resistance were developed, disseminated across the district, debated and refined, and finally implemented through a very rapid consultation and consensus. No final decision was taken without people being offered the opportunity to provide input. The communities in the district maintained distinct cultural practices that were in direct counterpoint to Taliban policies, including the education of girls and the playing of music. The consensus-based decision-making restricted those who might want to fight, as all options – including fighting – were thoroughly discussed. Some young men who wanted to fight were encouraged and assisted to move out of the district.

These are a few examples of general findings of the STEPS Project. The Project is continuing to gather these stories and to refine understanding of the strategies used by these communities. The purpose of the project is to learn lessons that have wide-ranging application in our efforts to assist communities in their prevention of conflict. ■

Mr Marshall Wallace is Director of the STEPS Project, a Collaborative Learning Project run by the Collaborative for Development Action (Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA). Case studies have been written in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Colombia, Fiji, Kosovo, Nigeria, the Philippines, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka. See: www.cdainc.com

WORLD VISION

is a Christian relief and development partnership that serves more than 85 million people in nearly 100 countries. World Vision seeks to follow Christ's example by working with the poor and oppressed in the pursuit of justice and human transformation. Children are often most vulnerable to the effects of poverty. World Vision

works with each partner community to ensure that children are able to enjoy improved nutrition, health and education. Where children live in especially difficult circumstances, surviving on the streets, suffering in exploitative labour, or exposed to the abuse and trauma of conflict, World Vision works to restore hope and to bring justice.

World Vision recognises that poverty is not inevitable. Our Mission Statement calls us to challenge those unjust structures that constrain the poor in a world of false priorities, gross inequalities and distorted values. World Vision desires that all people be able to reach their God-given potential, and thus works for a world that no longer tolerates poverty. ■

The Golden Rule as conflict prevention

Bill Lowrey

THE LORD'S RESISTANCE ARMY in Northern Uganda abducted a young adult named James. For several months he was forced to witness atrocities – adults abusing children and children forced to kill or maim other children. His break came when a former school age-mate assisted his escape. Then came the most important turning point for James: would he choose the path of violence and vengeance? or was there a better way?

James was a Christian; he knew that Jesus had said, “Do to others what you would have them do to you” (Luke 6:31).

Something clicked inside him. Rather than escalate a cycle of conflict, James chose a path of peaceful engagement.

He helped establish a World Vision programme for rescued and escaped children. With his passion for peace, and desire to help traumatised children of war, James continues to work for peace in Northern Uganda (despite attempts to re-abduct him), and leads an East Africa Peace Network.

The “Golden Rule” is not unique to Christians. All major world religions include some version of this teaching:

Islam *“Not one of you is a believer until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself.”*
Fortieth Hadith of an-Nawawi, 13

Hinduism *“This is the sum of duty: do naught unto others which would cause you pain if done to you.”*
The Mahabharata, 5:1517

Buddhism *“Hurt not others in ways you yourself would find hurtful.”*
Udana-Varga, 5:18

Judaism *“You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am the Lord.”*
Leviticus 19:18

What does this have to do with conflict prevention? Isn't that about building relationships across conflict lines, programmes that sustain livelihoods, or reforming systems and structures to improve justice? All of these are critical to conflict prevention. But another arena for change is just as critical: that of beliefs, attitudes and behaviours.

Every day, individuals make choices based on beliefs and attitudes that shape their own behaviour and others'. Choosing to follow the “Golden Rule” can prevent many conflicts from escalating, and contribute to peaceful and just relationships. James says: “If you embrace the Golden Rule, it becomes a life calling... God shapes you into an agent of peace.”

The application is leveraged further when organisations embed this into their core values and modes of operation. What if NGOs treated other NGOs the way they want to be treated? What if UN agencies applied this value to all of their relationships with other agencies and states? What if governing authorities applied it to citizens? It would be

naïve to think that this can happen across the board. But it is just as naïve to think that systemic changes and relationship networking alone can prevent conflict.

Sustainable conflict prevention and conflict transformation call for deep reflection within people and a commitment to pursue this most basic and universal of values, the Golden Rule. In World Vision, when we say that we seek to follow Jesus in working with the poor and oppressed, that is a challenge to every staff member to be transformed daily from the inside out, and to do to others what we would have them do to us. ■

Dr William O Lowrey is Director of Reconciliation and Peacebuilding for World Vision International.



James

PHOTO - KALEBBO GEOFFREY DENYE / WORLD VISION



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