

## Chapter Two. What has the peacebuilding field achieved?

### 2.1 Who are 'peacebuilders' and what do they stand for?

This paper is based on a major assumption: that there is a recognisable constituency of people worldwide who think of themselves as contributing to, or building peace. A large number of them are engaged outside governments: in civil society organisations, in universities and media. Fewer, but growing in number, are those involved in political structures, both 'modern' and 'traditional', or in lobbying and campaigning from the global to the local scale. There are those who do this work implicitly or explicitly from a faith perspective. Yet others defy such conventional descriptions.

This community knows no single name and has no common platform as yet, beyond a commitment to peace, however defined, and a more or less familiar set of references on both theory and practice.

In this community there is much talk of process and impact assessment, of capacity building and advocacy, of practice and policy (so much jargon already), but very little discussion about what is meant by peace, about vision, values and big picture goals, about politics and power, although these are crucial in defining the process of peacebuilding. Much of the field sells itself largely as the provider of technical services – dialogue-building, small arms reduction, reform of the security sector – and it uses a bewildering array of names to frame them. This does not help either the peacebuilding community itself, or the outside world, unless there is some agreement on what these differences are. Is it conflict resolution or conflict transformation, conflict prevention or violence prevention? Some can define these easily, others do not see the point, yet others are mystified.

In all this, many practitioners would probably resist being described as political – especially perhaps those who work as outsiders to a conflict. Yet political this field surely is, if anything. One of its much trumpeted tenets is that means and ends are inseparable, yet somehow this is overlooked in practice.

The evidence suggests that peacebuilders have made some not inconsiderable achievements, despite accompanying ambivalences and confusions. Indeed, these may even have been an asset by enabling the inclusion of many divergent ideas and groupings. But will such internal dissonance serve the peacebuilding community, or those they work with and for, well enough in the future, if the ambition is to bring about real change?

In the remaining part of this chapter we outline what we believe are the achievements of the peacebuilding field since the end of the Cold War, which spurred its major growth.

### 2.2 Civil society peacebuilding: achievements so far

#### 2.2.1 *Distinctive conceptual and methodological basis*

##### *Methodologies*

Distinctive and innovative methods of analysis and intervention have been developed, often inspired by developments in a range of subjects, from social psychology to adult education to management studies. Especially notable perhaps have been graphic, easy to use tools of conflict

analysis, many forms and styles of dialogue at different levels, from grassroots to high level, continuous development of mediation processes, including a substantial movement in peer mediation in schools, elaborate schemes for early warning and, perhaps less successfully, early response.

At a global level, organisations such as Mennonite Central Committee in the US and Responding to Conflict in UK, amongst others, have developed practice-focussed methodologies for cross-cultural training. Many people, including civil servants and staff of intergovernmental organisations, have followed these programmes, lasting up to three months.

#### *Education and capacity-building*

There has been a huge expansion of intellectual endeavour in peace studies and related areas at universities and colleges across the world, including those undertaking military research and training. A welter of opportunities has emerged for people to undertake peace studies up to PhD level. Initiated by the establishment of the first Peace Studies Department at Bradford University in 1973, this has produced a large number of graduates looking for work in the peace sector, as well as a growth of theoretical contributions, though still largely from Western universities. A huge amount of work has been undertaken in US universities, think-tanks, INGOs and foundations, such as the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and US Institute of Peace. Elsewhere many prominent universities have enhanced their reputations with peace studies departments. This essentially intellectual development has been complemented by a variety of academic courses which include a practical dimension, such as European University Center for Peace Studies and Applied Conflict Transformation Studies, a programme which pioneered the use of action research in peacebuilding.

Many CSOs have also developed their own training programmes, usually a few days in duration, providing initial skills in conflict analysis and various forms of intervention. Typically these courses are highly participative and experience-based, and contrast strongly with the methodologies usually employed at university level.

#### *Theory and discourse*

An increasingly clear, if still contested, theoretical articulation of different strands of peacebuilding and conflict transformation has thus emerged, putting further flesh on ideas. Names of creative thinkers such as Johan Galtung, Elise Boulding, Adam Curle, Mary Kaldor, Chris Mitchell, John Burton, John Paul Lederach, Diana Francis and Mary Anderson occur to us, but others will have their own sources of inspiration.

In addition, the adaptation of this in the form of the 'Do no harm' model has helped popularise aspects of peacebuilding, and give it credibility, amongst governments and development / humanitarian agencies. Other work by Collaborative for Development Action on civil society's experience of peacebuilding globally (such as through its Reflecting on Peace Practice project) has been invaluable in helping to crystallize theory of peace work. Likewise, the Berghof Research Centre has become a respected resource for developing theory from practice through its Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation. The 'Accord: an international review of peace initiatives' series by Conciliation Resources has build up a record of peacemaking experiences around the world.

#### *Analysis, commentary, and lobbying*

A number of think-tanks now provide reliable and challenging analysis of international issues from a conflict transformation perspective, informing and challenging governments and civil society alike, and at their best proposing viable alternatives in current conflicts. Among these, the International Crisis Group, Oxford Research Group and Transnational Foundation for Peace and

Future Research have established a strong international presence and are listened to at government and international level.

At the same time systematic work has taken place to develop the field of peace journalism, which entails the application of insights from peace and conflict studies to the everyday job of reporting and editing news.<sup>10</sup> Such training on critical analysis of war reporting and on practical guidelines and options, is increasingly offered to journalists in war-affected areas.

### **2.2.2 Making a difference – from grassroots to government level**

#### *Civil society as source of innovation and social mediation*

As a broad range of organisations and groups which are distinct from government and business, and which exist to promote the interests of their members and the issues they seek to address, civil society includes local, national and international organisations, trade unions, academia, faith groups and non-profit media. These can make a significant contribution to the transformation of conflict and building peace by supporting individual development, cultivating positive norms in communities and tackling those policies, systems and structures which exclude minorities and thus give rise to grievances. They are also sometimes in a position to develop contacts with groups proscribed by governments, yet crucial to peacebuilding, as in Case Study 1 below.

#### **Case study 1. Conflicts Forum – going where governments would not go**

Conflicts Forum is an international charitable organisation that uses the experience and connections of its two co-directors, former diplomats from US and the UK, to facilitate dialogue between political Islam and the West.

Conflicts Forum regards Islamist groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah as self-identified agents of political transformation in the region, that need to be engaged with and listened to, and aims to challenge ‘Western misconceptions and misrepresentations of the region’s leading agents of change’. Forum has thus focused its methodology on face-to-face dialogues and advocacy: for example, in 2005-06 it organised a series of informal dialogues between policymakers from US and UK, and Palestine, Lebanon, Egypt and Pakistan, as well as a series of dialogues on economy between Middle Eastern and Western economists and business people.

Its advocacy work includes interviews and presentations at think tanks and policy institutions, as well as face-to-face meetings with policy-makers in US, UK and Europe. It maintains an online archive of articles by its staff, advisors and associates. In partnership with a number of other policy think tanks, it is currently engaged in a project to develop ‘more inclusive and legitimate approaches to transforming the Middle East conflict’.

Conflicts Forum combines a high degree of professionalism with the courage to go beyond the accepted political boundaries of its government. ‘Talking with terrorists’, i.e. the perceived enemy at a particular moment, is essential in peace work, as is the informed lobbying that goes with it.

Source: [www.conflictsforum.org](http://www.conflictsforum.org)

While civil society is not always a force for peace, varied as it inevitably is in the views and positions its members take, the debates and initiatives cultivated by civil society organisations, and the protected space they provide for diversity and creative thinking, often serve as an impulse for it. As expressed by Catharine Barnes, “ultimately, a widespread, inclusive and vibrant engagement within civic life can be the incubator for the institutions and habits needed to resolve

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, [www.peacejournalism.org](http://www.peacejournalism.org)

conflict peacefully and generate more responsive and better governance needed to make peace sustainable.”<sup>11</sup>

Civil society has organised itself apace in both North and South since the early 1990s, as it became clear that the end of a bipolar world has not heralded an end to violence or the emergence of a ‘peace dividend’ – the term once used to describe the anticipated increase in funding for social programmes once the pressure to grow military forces had eased (although this may of course have had to do with the persistence of a global military industrial complex looking for a new role and new markets).

There are now over 1000 organisations working explicitly on peace and conflict issues worldwide<sup>12</sup>, and many more if one includes those aid and development agencies that have recognised peacebuilding as a key principle of their work. In addition there are many agencies working in at least implicit alliance, both globally and locally, on aspects of what peacebuilding describes as ‘positive peace’<sup>13</sup> – human (including gender) rights, democratic governance, disarmament, poverty reduction and development, education and environment.

#### *Local peacebuilding work*

In many parts of the world people have demonstrated what it is to be truly human by mobilising at local level to reduce violence and develop new ways of working on conflict. Coming together in small groups, they have worked with the existing ‘traditional’ structures such as elders and chiefs, or refashioned them, or created their own organisations. This has enabled the emergence and spread of innumerable self-help grassroots initiatives dedicated to preventing violence and building peace. The range of activity has been remarkable, and included reconciliation, mediation, nonviolent action and promotion of nonviolence, setting up peace zones and campaigning. Often these have been integrated into work for development and environmental protection. This gives rise to the inevitable thought: what they could do, we can all do.

These groups and organisations, at their best, have proved uniquely able to work on a core issue of identity, finding ways in which people can come into everyday contact with others across geographic and conflict boundaries, resisting the pull to seek a self-defeating safety in one exclusive group, whether of faith, caste, ethnicity or nation. Many of these community-based organisations are playing (necessarily) unsung ‘frontline’ roles in highly volatile dangerous confrontations and building the space necessary for political dialogue, as in the case study 2 below.

#### **Case study 2. Concerned Citizens for Peace, Kenya, 2008**

In early 2008, when violence erupted in Kenya after disputed elections, five respected individuals came together almost immediately to address the resulting political vacuum: an ambassador, two former generals and two civil society activists. All of them had substantial and varied expertise in peacebuilding.

This group formed the Core Group of ‘Concerned Citizens for Peace’ (CCP). Their first public action was to establish an open forum where people could share experience and initiate actions. The forum took place regularly, several times a week. It was bringing together upwards of 100 individuals, CSOs, INGOs, politicians and civil servants, to help coordinate a response to the situation.

<sup>11</sup> Barnes, Catherine. Governments and Civil Society Organisations: Issues in Working Together Towards Peace. Available at [www.gppac.net/documents/GPPAC/Research/Rapport2\\_2.pdf](http://www.gppac.net/documents/GPPAC/Research/Rapport2_2.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> 1028 were listed in ECCP’s directory of NGOs working in the field of conflict prevention as of 9 March 2008. See <http://www.gppac.org/page.php?id=1481>

<sup>13</sup> The concept introduced by Johan Galtung in the 1960s to denote the absence of structural violence as well as personal violence.

The forum was publicised through the media, including some of the mobile telephone networks. Five key social sectors were identified which needed early intervention: women, youth, interreligious groups, media and private sector. Specific individuals within each of these sectors joined the Core Group to form a Technical Committee to track activities, follow up on responses and ensure that communication was quick and effective within and across these sectors.

The Core Group were initially available every day at the hotel where the high level political talks were taking place. They engaged actively with international initiatives, both formal and informal. Critical information about what was happening, rumours that were circulating, and concerns of the people on the ground were channelled to the mediation team. Action was often taken to preempt particular activities in the country and prevent the cycle of violence from spiralling completely out of control.

As the political situation began to stabilise, the Core Group set out to establish similar groups with activists in each region of Kenya, where grievances remained strong. Their role was not only to defuse outbreaks of violence but also to uncover and begin to address the underlying conflict issues. They aimed to become an effective, country-wide peacebuilding structure for as long as needed. At the same time, they were, and are, keen to reflect on the whole process as it develops and learn actively from it.

See [www.peaceinkenya.net](http://www.peaceinkenya.net) for the Amani Sasa newsletters and other information on CCP

More widely acknowledged is the role played by women's organisations with a peace mandate, ranging from the global UNIFEM to local groups such as Mothers for the Disappeared and Black Sash.

While it is rare for grassroots efforts to transform wider systems of conflict and war, it is now evident that these wider systems cannot be transformed without stimulating changes at the community level. Local groups and CSOs have demonstrated beyond doubt that there is a need to build peace from the bottom-up as well as from the top-down and the middle outwards.

#### *Mass nonviolent movements for regime change*

When conditions are right, popular organisations may develop into coalitions which proved able to challenge and unseat governments. During the 1990s and on into this century there has been an increase in the number of movements which have achieved differing degrees of regime change with minimal or no violence. The Philippines, Nepal, Serbia, Georgia are among a large number.<sup>14</sup> Many of these were supported and strengthened by the work of local CSOs, but emerged as a result of popular feeling and mobilisation by various groups – not infrequently assisted by outside parties (although it must be noted that sometimes the 'outside help' was pursuing its own ends, e.g. Western governments supporting Western-leaning actors, which may or may not have been in the best interests of the local population). The conditions for success tended to depend on the determination and ruthlessness of those in power – thus, widespread efforts in Burma have succeeded in mobilising popular support but continue to be brutally repressed. There are questions too about the long term impact of such seismic changes on the power structures of the countries concerned.

#### *International civil society programmes*

As peacebuilding CSOs have expanded, they have spawned international programmes. Relatively few are yet of a substantial size and the sector is characterised by medium-sized and small organisations many of which tend to be dedicated to specific issues or constituencies, such as arms sales, war children, peace education or trauma healing. But others have been running more comprehensive, multilevel programmes over several years in critical areas such as the Great Lakes, Middle East, the Caucasus, South Asia and Latin America. Conciliation Resources, for

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<sup>14</sup> Selected Cases of Civil Resistance Since 1945, as above.

example, has been engaged in complex dialogue programmes involving both political and civil society levels in the Caucasus for several years, and has achieved widespread respect for its dedication and professionalism. Peace Direct in the UK is pioneering methods for building broad public awareness and understanding of peace work, and specialises in direct support for groups and individuals working in violent situations. Where they are funded by governments, such INGO programmes have the advantage of better resourcing, and the potential disadvantage of implementing the policies of their paymasters, with all the caveats that brings. This poses interesting dilemmas for the lobbying role which CSOs increasingly recognise as important. How far are they prepared to go in criticising the hand that feeds them?

In the wider dimension of 'positive', or 'greater', peace, there are notably development-focussed organisations that have taken on aspects of the peace and conflict agenda. They have done so in different degrees, from a proactive stance on violence prevention and peacebuilding, to a minimalist conflict sensitive approach. Many rights, gender, environmental and community relations organisations, who are key players from a peacebuilding perspective, would undoubtedly share similar long term goals but may often use a different vocabulary to express them; thus, there are few signs as yet of a common agenda developing across the sector.

#### *Government-level awareness and influence*

Multilateralism, which lies at the heart of international peacebuilding, has struggled over the past 20 years in the face of national power play and the dominance of global corporations. This has become even more pronounced since 2001 and the launch of the 'War on Terror'. In this context, individual governments have made their own efforts: for example, in Kenya the National Peacebuilding Commission brings together the different parties concerned with peace and security, including CSOs. In the UK, DFID undertook a consultation process during 2006-7 to develop a conflict policy which reflects much mainstream peacebuilding discourse. Another example is the recently established Bolivian Alternative for the Americas, a trade and cooperation organisation in Latin America.

The establishment of the UN Peacebuilding Commission in 2005 is potentially an important step forward in enabling the expertise of global civil society to access global intergovernmental thinking. It follows on from earlier pioneering work by the UN, including the joint UNDP-WHO 'Armed Violence Prevention Programme', the 1994 'Agenda for Peace', many peacekeeping missions, and the drawing up of the Charter itself, as well as the emergence of the body of international legal instruments. The attempts by Scandinavian countries to develop national policies which integrate peacebuilding ideas into national defence and security have been pioneering, though none, to the authors' knowledge, have yet included the interior and justice ministries.<sup>15</sup>

#### *Global networking*

Various international networks have sprung up, linking individuals and organisations on a regional and global basis. Those of a more general orientation include Action for Conflict Transformation, which comprises regional networks in Asia, Africa (Coalition for Peace in Africa) and Latin America,

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<sup>15</sup> SIDA's Policy on 'Promoting Peace and Security through Development Cooperation' states: "Because of today's broader security concept, development co-operation is increasingly seen to have an important role to play in the areas of peace and security, in tandem with military security policy, diplomacy and trade policy" ([http://www.sida.se/sida/jsp/sida.jsp?d=118&a=3585&language=en\\_US](http://www.sida.se/sida/jsp/sida.jsp?d=118&a=3585&language=en_US)). According to Raymond Johansen, Norway State Secretary, "Our involvement in [peace] processes and our efforts in the UN and development assistance are gradually being fused with security policy – security policy for the 21st century – security policy for the age of globalisation". Speech at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Somali Peace Conference, Oslo, 22 May 2006. Available at [http://www.norway-un.org/News/News+Archive/20060523\\_johansen\\_somalia.htm](http://www.norway-un.org/News/News+Archive/20060523_johansen_somalia.htm)

and networks emanating from organisations such as Transcend and the Mennonite Central Committee.

The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) is a worldwide civil society-led network, with fifteen regional sections, aiming to “build a new international consensus on peacebuilding and the prevention of violent conflict” and working on “strengthening civil society networks for peace and security by linking local, national, regional, and global levels of action and effective engagement with governments, the UN system and regional organizations.”<sup>16</sup>

Some networks have characteristics more typical of a movement and have proved very effective. Examples include the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and the Combating Conflict Diamonds campaign to prevent the diamond industry from being used to fund wars.

Religious networks have flourished too. Attempts by the ecumenical movement to link justice, peace and environmentally sustainable development go back to the 1970s. In 1980-90s the World Council of Churches took this further by introducing the concept of ‘justice, peace and the integrity of creation’ (JPIC), and more recently proclaimed 2001-2010 ‘The Ecumenical Decade to Overcome Violence’.<sup>17</sup> A network of Catholic Justice and Peace Commissions forms a web of international relationships and often has a strong impact locally.

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<sup>16</sup> Source: [www.gppac.org](http://www.gppac.org)

<sup>17</sup> For more information, see [www.oikoumene.org](http://www.oikoumene.org)