# Just Wasting Our Time?

## An Open Letter to Peacebuilders

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# An open letter to peacebuilders

Dear friends,

Greetings. If your work and interest is focussed on peaceful change, this letter is for you. You may be working in one of many fields: development, rights, community relations, the environment perhaps, or you may be working directly for peace. You may use a variety of terms to express your work, be that conflict sensitivity, peacebuilding, conflict transformation or social change. We would like to share a deep concern with you.

The two authors of this letter are from different generations, and different parts of the world. We both began working in this field with high hopes. We joined up through our commitment to social and political transformation. We believed that it offered a place where vision, values and practice could come together. Peacebuilding, we thought, was about far-reaching change in the way the world works in order to reduce violence in all its forms and promote wellbeing through nonviolent methods of resolving conflicts.

We are responding now to the voices and views of colleagues and partners we have worked with in different parts of the world, many of whom work with local groups or organisations and who have raised, and written about, a good number of the issues set out here. Often these colleagues are involved in funding partnerships with civil society organisations from the 'global North' and do not feel free to voice the questions raised about the role of international non-governmental organisations (INGOs). When they do they are often not sure they are heard.

We believe there is, at this moment, a window of opportunity for transformative peacebuilding to come of age, to be taken seriously by governments, social movements and business alike, as major crises continue to resist military solutions and global environmental constraints combine to throw up intractable new conflicts.

The post-election events in Kenya in early 2008 have demonstrated the power and imagination of civil society when it is mobilised and well led. However, for all their achievements, many in today's community of peacebuilders remain deeply unclear about what they are aiming to do. Few practitioners or thinkers seem to be willing to look at peacebuilding in the wider context, and to address some of the apparent contradictions. Peacebuilding, as an activity of civil society, is in danger of missing the opportunity and becoming irrelevant to real change, both local and global. It is no surprise that a recent seminar of peace workers in the Balkans was entitled: 'Are we just nice people wasting our time?'

Many INGOs, including those working on development and humanitarian assistance, demonstrate confusion about their role in relation to peace, which infects their policymaking and often leads them to settle for an ineffective, minimalist approach. If they could resolve this uncertainty their work would, we believe, have a much greater and more lasting impact. So while this paper may bring some unsettling questions, we hope that it also has the potential to make their lives easier by providing a stimulus for this process and some signposts along the way.

In the paper we trace how many activists in the peacebuilding field no longer own the vision which inspired the first pioneers of this field, and have settled for what we are calling a 'technical' approach to dealing with conflict, in contrast to the 'transformative' approach which characterised the field at its inception. While the technical approach may provide practical solutions to immediate problems, and incidentally enable the growth of many international and local organisations to deliver them, it does not address the underlying social system and

dynamics. In many cases peacebuilding as currently practised serves to reinforce the way the world works, which can be characterised (forgive the jargon, and the oversimplification) by two phrases: geopolitical hegemony and globalised business – at the expense of the planet and the wellbeing of most of its inhabitants, including humans. Many peace workers are thus unintentionally living a lie, colluding in a world order which is inherently unjust, unsustainable and destructive. Have they – we – lost the sense of whose peace needs to be built?

The paper points also to other, related weaknesses which undermine the impact of peacebuilding, including an undue deference to political and economic power (which allows for frequent co-option), an endemic lack of cooperation across civil society, and a severe shortage of activist practitioners who combine the experience and skill necessary to address complex conflicts.

What is to be done? We hope that this will be the subject of many conversations. The outcomes will hopefully be many and rich. For ourselves, we see the possibility of work on at least two levels simultaneously: first, an initiative within global civil society to develop and promote a set of best advice and principles, stemming from a distillation of global practice, for the peaceful resolution of violent conflict and its underlying causes, which can then be used to lobby for change with governments and business alike. In this, a widely inclusive process will be critical. At the same time we would encourage the peacebuilding community, and in particular the INGO sector, to organise itself to become a more effective resource to drive such change. For this, peacebuilders will need to go beyond their comfort zone to rediscover their vision and relevance in today's world of multiple, interconnected threats to wellbeing. We believe this is likely to lead to much closer integration with the work of others, especially those who are addressing the key, linked global issues of economic injustice, environmental destruction and oppression (denial of rights and participation). It will hopefully lead to a more systematic integration of transformative elements into every activity and programme, from the smallest to the largest. Such change will require a willingness to network more wholeheartedly, and to develop new partnerships. It will also necessitate a willingness by peacebuilders to take their own power seriously, and use it. It will require a commitment to action learning at all levels and the development of new opportunities.

As you would expect from practitioners, this letter has a very practical objective: to galvanise actors in this and related fields to rediscover the vision and relevance of peacebuilding and conflict transformation, to press for, and embody, well-articulated changes, at home as well as elsewhere, and back up a convincing discourse with a willingness both to pressurise and deliver. The letter comes largely from a practice base, and needs to be challenged and further developed from other perspectives. It reflects the inevitably limited experience of the authors. We welcome all suggestions. Where we have offended please forgive us: it is not intentional.

We believe that there has never been a better time to challenge the notion that violence and warfare 'work', in the sense of delivering the anticipated goals, whether as terrorism or state military interventionism. There has never been a more opportune moment to demonstrate the power of alternative methods of handling conflicts in order to build peace with justice.

Please take time to read and discuss the paper with colleagues. It can be downloaded from the website www.lettertopeacebuilders.ning.com. We invite you to write to lettertopeacebuilders@gmail.com with your comments. Would you would be interested in taking some of this thinking further, and turning aspects of it into action?

Simon Fisher and Lada Zimina

March 2008

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# Chapter One. A window of opportunity

## 1.1 Current global context

People live in seemingly different worlds and see the world differently. Some align themselves with national and corporate interests and seek protection under their umbrellas. Others find this unfortunate, hoping that it may only be a staging post on the way to a world which is ruled equitably and democratically through treaties and accountable global institutions. Others see a world of massive injustices and double standards built on the economy and politics of globalization.

Wherever people find themselves on the political spectrum, most would agree that at this moment in history the world society is unstable and highly conflictual, and change, for good or ill, is happening fast. And, whatever people's views, it can be convincingly argued that the change is largely driven by globalised economic interests, with governments following behind more or less willingly. As a result, millions are led to expect ever higher living standards, while many more are threatened by a nexus of four core issues: economic injustice and poverty; denial of rights and participation in society; climate change and energy constraints; and armed violence. [1]

*Interlinking issues*
These issues are often treated singly, as separate phenomena, whereas in fact they are closely linked. The peacebuilding field has focussed on war and the drivers of war, but wars and organised violence today can no longer realistically be treated separately from other key drivers of human society.

Certainly, amidst global injustice and environmental degradation, war is used as an instrument of domination, and often of resistance or liberation. But the grievances of poverty and marginalisation serve as causal factors leading to war, and war is all too often used to extend economic and political dominance – in other words, for greed.

Whatever war's causes or justifications, its impact is not only suffering and death on an incomprehensible scale, but the further exacerbation of poverty, with all the misery and deprivation it entails: through forced migration, the disruption of lives and livelihoods and the destruction of the infrastructure needed for economic development. Similarly, while pressure on scarce resources and the desire to exploit and control them may be a factor behind violent conflict, war constitutes a monumental waste and diversion of the resources necessary to eradicate poverty. At the same time it destroys, degrades and pollutes the earth, its atmosphere and its creatures. Its environmental footprint is gigantic and goes largely unnoticed by those not immediately affected by it. Yet war continues to be seen as a worthwhile activity, often for the short-term economic and political dividend it brings.

The disregard for the rights and needs of other human beings that is embodied in exploitative systems and in wars is accompanied by the endemic disregard for human rights within societies, whether by factions within those societies or by the governments that supposedly control them. It is ironic how powerful states claiming to act in favour of human rights and democracy show their contempt for both through illegal and immoral acts of war, and through curtailing human rights within their own societies.

[1] The analysis presented in the following section draws on previous work by an informal group which included Simon Fisher; the full account can be found in Francis, Diana. A project to transform policy, starting in the UK. CCTS Review 35, November 2007. Available at http://www.c-r.org/ccts/ccts35/review35.pdf . See also Case Study 7 on p. 36 below.

While violent forms of struggle for and against domination are the order of the day, with the summary curtailment or gradual erosion of individual freedoms that come in their wake, the freedom and power to participate in social and political life are drastically diminished. And in those countries that are relatively safe and privileged, materialism and disaffection combine to allow political participation to atrophy, so undermining the democracy such countries claim as their foundation. Political activism tends in response to manifest more in engagement with single-issue pressure groups, such as in the environmental movements. These are important in themselves, but risk missing the big picture in their attention to specific aspects and symptoms of dysfunction.

*Changing patterns of power*

Against this background we live in a world order which is in flux, and demonstrably not economically or environmentally sustainable. The global balance of power is changing – it is no accident that the main theme of the 2007 meeting of the World Economic Forum at Davos was the 'shifting power equation'. Big business and high politics agree that the world is becoming more difficult to manage as the unipolar, US-dominated global dynamic gives way to something infinitely more complex and less amenable to domination by any one group or state. Horizontally, key factors such as the rise of India and China, and the runaway dependence on finite energy sources are leading towards a much broader, perhaps less predictable multipolarity.

At the same time the states themselves are losing power to non-state actors. Big corporations individually are more powerful than many small states; INGOs[2] like Greenpeace, Oxfam and Human Rights Watch are getting their key issues on the world's agenda; inter-governmental organisations such as the EU, World Bank, and even the UN, all maintain or increase their influence. New technologies have empowered many of these actors, and created others, such as the global blogging movement World Have Your Say, which can mobilise and articulate global opinion on issues of the moment. Individual bloggers have discovered a great new ability to exert influence through communicating events directly, as was shown dramatically during the Burma uprisings of 2007. Through these changes, non-state networks of every kind have also gained impact hugely.

This diffusion of power has inevitably undermined the traditional power of the state in many parts of the world to impose its will, on its own people as well as on others. As a sign of this power shift it is instructive to note the remarkable incidence of regime change through civil resistance and popular power over the past 15 years or so.[3]

*Inadequate responses*

Current approaches by many governments to tackling injustice and conflict remain however rooted in the implicit assumptions of the past and as such are, not surprisingly, often counterproductive. Although the overall number of violent conflicts in the world is relatively low,[4]

[2] There is a plethora of terms to describe the activity of civil society – "a supranational sphere of social and political participation in which citizens groups, social movements, and individuals engage in dialogue, debate, confrontation, and negotiation with each other and with various governmental actors—international, national, and local—as well as the business world" (Anheier, H., M. Glasius and M. Kaldor (eds) Global Civil Society. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, p.4). In this article we use the terms 'civil society organisation' (CSO) to denote local and national-level organisations and groups, and 'international non-governmental organisation' (INGO) to denote largely Northern-based CSOs working beyond their home country.

[3] For a concise list of civil resistance movements see Selected Cases of Civil Resistance Since 1945, available at http://www.sant.ox.ac.uk/esc/civil_resistance/map_and_Timeline.pdf

[4] There were 32 armed conflicts in 2006, a decline from the average of more than 60 in the immediate post-Cold war years. See Harbom, L. and P. Wallensteen, Armed Conflicts 1989-2006. Journal of Peace Research, vol. 44, No 5, September 2007.

we need look no further than Iraq and Afghanistan, Darfur, Zimbabwe and Israel/Palestine to see the apparently unquestioning faith which the powerful continue to put in weaponry, and its terrible results for people and the planet. Militarised views of the world still dominate its politics. The capacity and the will of global society to solve conflicts and address injustice peacefully is desperately inadequate in the face of today's need, let alone tomorrow's; the risk of intense conflict arising from the complexity of issues is given scant attention.

International peace practitioners, for their part, and other global civil society players who have peace as part of their remit, remain weak and implicitly focussed on a relatively narrow approach to peace, without full recognition of the interconnectedness and flux of the system. As a result, the strategies they offer tend to be inadequate, in the sense that they merely serve to reinforce the circumstances which gave rise to violence and warfare in the first place.

*Positive signs?*

If national power projection and the use of armed violence remain the preferred option of the powerful in dealing with intractable conflicts, it is hard to be optimistic either about the wellbeing of many millions of people in the short to medium-term, or about a successful response to devastating climate change.

Still, things may be starting to change. In many locations and at many levels there is evidence that a search is underway for new ways to address conflicts. Increasingly, for example, the military in the UK and US are saying publicly that wars do not work any longer – even for them.[5] However, there is as yet little sign of more than sporadic, patchy political acceptance of the need for new thinking, let alone systematic planning about how it might be met. Institutional changes at the UN, such as the new Peacebuilding Commission are a start, but they are far from adequate to address the issues we are facing.

There are exceptions to this, notably among Scandinavian governments. There are also some signs in the UK which indicate a hunger in government circles for new insights and models in relation to peace. The civil service has been re-organised to accommodate teams of officials working on conflict issues, especially in the Department for International Development (DFID) and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). DFID recently organised a consultative process in drawing up its new policy document on conflict.[6] A new All-Party Parliamentary Group on Conflict Issues, dedicated to getting realistic, nonviolent alternatives into the UK policy debate, is beginning to attract attention, if not yet the consequent understanding, in political and military circles.

For the optimists, there are other international signs of positive change. One can point for example to the following:

- *A UN milestone.* In April 2007 the Security Council met to discuss climate change for the first time. It did so, surprisingly, and at the behest of the UK government, in the context of conflict and security and, again surprisingly to many, there was broad agreement that the issue poses a clear threat, perhaps the major threat, to international relations and global stability in the future.
- *Changing international consensus.* International thinking about how conflicts are most effectively addressed has progressed enormously over the past 15 years. *Pace* the dominance of the neo-conservatives in the US, and their allies in the UK in the early years of this century, governments and civil society alike are developing a consensus over some of the key pillars of

[5] See, for example, Smith, Rupert. The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World, Penguin 2006.
[6] Preventing Violent Conflict, UK Department for International Development, March 2007. Available at http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Pubs/files/preventing-conflict.pdf

peacebuilding, including the salient importance of early warning and prevention of conflict (i.e. violence), international cooperation and agreement, the effectiveness of peacekeeping, security sector and governance reforms.

- *Increasing impact of negotiation in ending wars.* Since the 1990s more wars have ended through negotiated settlements than victory: between 2000 and 2005 negotiated outcomes were four times as numerous as victories.[7] However, it must not be forgotten that the longer-term success of these negotiated outcomes is as yet unknown, and inevitably fragile, as the case of Sudan currently illustrates.

Underlying this apparent momentum is what Gareth Evans, President of International Crisis Group, describes as: "the huge upsurge in activity in conflict prevention, conflict management, diplomatic peacemaking and post-conflict peacebuilding activity that has occurred over the past fifteen years, with most of this being spearheaded by the UN itself (but with the World Bank, donor states, a number of regional security organisations and literally thousands of NGOs playing significant roles of their own)."[8]

But as yet, the peacebuilding message seems too muted, weak and fragmented to capitalise on these potential advantages. Peacebuilders are failing to make the political waves necessary to convince others, and perhaps even themselves, while globalised corporate power exerts ever more undemocratic control over the essential components of peace. Now that the political window may be opening, and an opportunity knocks, will we be unprepared and divided? What can we do? What have we to say?

### 1.2 Making choices

The authors of this paper came into this field at very different points in time, but with similar values. We believe that peacebuilding and conflict transformation have the potential to offer viable alternatives to costly, ineffective and often highly destructive 'top-down' methods of dealing with conflicts and their causes. We have seen this peacebuilding paradigm begin to prove itself in practice, little by little, evolving from its foundations in disciplines such as philosophy, political science, social psychology and international relations, and in a variety of religions, providing an invaluable source of insights and innovative approaches, both at policy and practice levels. Some of its achievements are summarised in Chapter 2 below.

But we also see that the peacebuilding community is stunted by a variety of factors, among which are a lack of clarity – or is it consensus? – about values and goals, the often incoherent, short-term manner in which goals are implemented, excessively deferential attitudes to those holding political power, organisational rivalry, and a shortage of competent practitioners. Peacebuilding and development organisations alike seem to be failing the challenge.

Pioneered up until now largely by a small section of global civil society, working through a variety of groups, organisations and networks, the peacebuilding community is faced with a choice:

- It can continue as now, largely irrelevant to the big picture, atomised yet effective in patches, here and there, operating largely at the behest of governments and in isolation from various economic interests.

[7] Human Security Brief 2006, Human Security Centre, University of Britsh Columbia. Quoted in Barnes, Catherine. Bridging the gap – Improving UK support for peace processes, Conciliation Resources, June 2007, p.11. Available at http://www.c-r.org/our-work/practice-policy/CR_Bridging_the_Gap_Working_Paper.pdf

[8] Evans, Gareth. Conflict Prevention: Ten Lessons We Have Learned, Toronto, February 2007. Available at http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4653&l=1

- Or, it can respond to the current opportunity, revisit its basic assumptions and values, and look actively and ambitiously for ways to achieve its potential as a source of legitimate, tried and tested alternative approaches to addressing the world's conflicts.

This paper argues that the peacebuilding community – all those who see themselves as working for peace, justice and development – needs to start getting its own house in order. It needs to have further conversations about 'peace writ large', a term introduced but not substantially explored by Collaborative for Development Action (CDA).[9] Whose peace are peacebuilders working for? Is such work regarded as 'transforming' – seeking ultimately to challenge the unsustainable, unjust status quo and bring about profound change towards greater justice and wellbeing? or is it essentially 'technical' peacebuilding, focussed on project-bound locations and time-scales and trusting that the bigger picture will look after itself (which it surely will do, after its fashion)?

In beginning to address this and related questions, there will be much more then to say to the wider world, and much that can be done to extend the scope of peacebuilding into three key areas of global power:

- Wider civil society, locally and globally, concerned with interrelated issues such as rights, democracy-building, economic justice, humanitarian aid and environment;
- Governments and intergovernmental institutions such as the UN;
- Commerce and business, both local and global.

Chapters 3 and 4 of this paper set out to ask questions and suggest some options for what needs to be done in the impending multiple crises going forward.

What follows in Chapter 2 below is a brief, inevitably impressionistic overview of the main achievements of the field. It does not try to do full justice to what has been achieved in the relatively short space of time since late 1980s. It does, however, name some of the key elements which now need to be built on purposefully, with wisdom and courage.

[9] Reflecting on Peace Practice, CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, 2004. Available at http://www.cdainc.com/cdawww/pdf/manual/reflectingonpeacepracticehandbook_Pdf.pdf

# 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 cristallize 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 initatives’ 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.[10] 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*

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

[10] See, for example, www.peacejournalism.org

conflict peacefully and generate more responsive and better governance needed to make peace sustainable."[11]

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[12], 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'[13] – 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.

[11] Barnes, Catherine. Governments and Civil Society Organisations: Issues in Working Together Towards Peace. Available at www.gppac.net/documents/GPPAC/Research/Rapport2_2.pdf

[12] 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

[13] 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 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.[14] 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

[14] 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.[15]

*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,

[15] 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). 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 2nd Annual Somali Peace Conference, Oslo, 22 May 2006. Available at 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."[16]

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'.[17] A network of Catholic Justice and Peace Commissions forms a web of international relationships and often has a strong impact locally.

[16] Source: www.gppac.org
[17] For more information, see www.oikoumene.org

# Chapter Three. What is holding us back?

Looking at what has been achieved, and the potential within the field, some will say that there is real hope: with this array of successes, it may be possible to change the 'terms of trade', so to speak, to provide a distinctive and practicable alternative paradigm for civil society, politicians and business to set aside the grossly inadequate models now in use. If only there were more resources and more time, the argument goes, this paradigm could get adopted, with more political access and more coherent and sustained implementation of peacebuilding. Maybe then there would be a real impact beyond specific programmes and projects…

But there are other, more questioning voices: what if there are serious flaws in the whole process and vision, assumptions and values? What if there are contradictions at the heart of peacebuilding? While these voices have already been raised in peacebuilding and other movements for change, they were highly contested and often muted. Now they are being heard more loudly, demanding a response.

This Chapter explores the rationale behind these critical points of view. It identifies some major obstacles to the achievement of big picture change. The subsequent Chapter 4 then sets out some possible and practical ways forward, if suitable energy can be mobilised.

## 3.1 Internal divisions weaken the field

The potential of the field seems to be curtailed by a number of major factors: value-based divisions, a lack of in-depth understanding of 'peace writ large', submissive attitudes to power, fragmented relationships between CSOs, including suspicion, mistrust and competition over resources, and a shortage of in-depth practitioner expertise. All have to do with two vital aspects of peacebuilding, vision and politics.

### *3.1.1 Vision and values*

The current field of peacebuilding would have its origins almost as far back as you wish to go. We especially need to acknowledge those who after World War I sowed the seeds of popular involvement in peace work, the fruits of which included the setting up of the League of Nations and the mobilisation of a grassroots movement for peace. Since World War II, many thinkers and activists have built on this foundation, in a variety of disciplines, expanding exponentially in the 1970s onwards through a range of writers and academics.

All of them put great importance on values. Amongst the landmarks, Adam Curle's 'True Justice' was one of the seminal books in the development of Peace Studies in the West. In it he was in no doubt that peacemaking involves radical social and personal transformation, requiring deep personal commitment and a high level of self awareness.[18] Inner peace, many of the pioneers agreed, was a crucial aspect of the development of peace workers.

Linked to these was the importance of empowerment and nonviolence. Peace work required a major shift from conventional thinking, because it concerned building the fundamentals of a healthy society. It involved struggle: resistance to attempts to remove hard won achievements and rights as well as creative promotion of new strategies and institutions. You cannot do peace without in some real way being peace, or in Gandhi's words, 'be the peace you want to see in the

[18] Curle, Adam. True Justice: Quaker Peacemakers and Peace Making (Swarthmore Lecture), Quaker Books, 1981.

world'. People who joined the field at that time were challenged to think about these values, and how to achieve them in the societies in which they lived. The implications were potentially revolutionary and many were inspired, as the authors have been, by these writings and by the people themselves.[19] As a consequence of these beginnings much effort went into developing a deeper understanding of peace, conflict, violence and their underlying dynamics.

Today, one of the central messages of the peacebuilding community is that peace requires more than behavioural change to reduce and eliminate direct violence. Mission statements and public documents talk about negative and positive peace, about addressing structural violence and working for deep cultural change. They speak of the need to ask whose peace one is working for, and to change the perception of conflict as necessarily violent and harmful. Conflict is inevitable, and potentially a force for constructive change as it signals critical fault-lines in a community or society and thus presents opportunities for addressing them. Development, in so far as it seeks to change a situation of poverty and injustice, is recognised as inherently conflictual. How that conflict is waged is key to the quality of the development process.

Peacebuilders point to major world issues such as economic injustice, denial of rights and participation, and environmental destruction, as underlying drivers of violence. In their work, they talk of systems, and how big changes can be initiated by small strategic interventions. This strategic thinking has embedded within it the idea of multilevel, long-term change and peacebuilding training often includes the skills and approaches needed for this.

In short, much of this background and conceptual underpinning looks to far-reaching change. The term 'conflict transformation' is perhaps most widely used now to express how this work is expected to contribute to building a big picture which would be radically different from the current state of the world.

### *3.1.2 Transformative and technical approaches*

And yet, the practice contrasts with the proclaimed goals and conceptual bases. It is as if the perceived arena for what is possible has shrunk inexorably, and peacebuilders have lost the ability to see the wood for the trees.

One sign of this is the reluctance of many organisations to spell out their core values beyond comfortable generalities: what do they understand by the 'bigger picture', and what are the ensuing implications for their work? A glance at a sample of documentation of peace organisations will confirm this.[20] Many are happier to develop strategic plans, funding proposals and risk assessments, than to clarify their ethical stance and draw out rigorously, and realistically, what that means, not only in the long term but in the here and now. Yet one could argue, on the

[19] See, for example, Fisher, Simon. Spirited Living: Waging Conflict, Building Peace (Swarthmore Lecture), Quaker Books, 2004.

[20] International Alert describes its vision as "a world in which, when people pursue their human rights and seek chances for betterment for themselves and their communities, conflicts that arise are pursued with honesty, with forthrightness and also with wisdom so that they do not erupt into violence" (International Alert Strategic Perspective 2005-2009, available at http://www.international-alert.org/publications/245.php); International Crisis Group spells out its goal as "prevention – to persuade those capable of altering the course of events to act in ways that reduce tensions and meet grievances, rather than letting them fester and explode into violent conflict" (International Crisis Group Annual Report 2007, available at http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/miscellaneous_docs/crisis_group_2007_annual_report_web.pdf); the mission of the Carter Center "is guided by a fundamental commitment to human rights and the alleviation of human suffering; it seeks to prevent and resolve conflicts, enhance freedom and democracy, and improve health" (see http://www.cartercenter.org/about/index.html).

strength of what people say about themselves and the field, that this second activity is a prerequisite of the first.

Further, the 'sustainable peace' being sought, the programmes and the expertise in hand often seem to amount in practice to little more than 'patching' – attempts to create the minimal stability that would allow the current world order, driven by market forces and geopolitical power constellations, to step in.

A glance at the available information on the programmes of INGOs suggests that the peace they are working for is little different from that envisaged by the world's power elites, entrenched in both governments and corporations. At least it is hard to find much serious evidence that they are making any kind of stand in principle or practice. Numerous pieces of peacebuilding research hosted in countries of the North address the causes of war far away from their shores without seriously drawing attention to the unprecedented militarising role played by their own countries as preservers of global economic and political order in their own image. The activities of multinational corporations, arguably the biggest players in 'the way the world works', are often entirely excluded from conflict analyses, and where they are included, any work with them tends to be confined to a bit of conflict sensitivity here, a bit more social responsibility there. And where, for most peacebuilders, do climate change or energy consumption figure, either as factors in conflict dynamics or in the way international organisations travel across the world conduct their meetings?

There is a huge global reflection going on as to what peace and wellbeing means for the world, and who should be responsible for it. The mantra of 'the more you have the happier you are', which has been the motor for economic and political development, is increasingly seen as not only unsound in terms of human development but also impracticable and self-defeating on a global scale. But the peacebuilding community does not seem to take much part in these debates. Many continue in the default mode of subscribing to the idea of liberal peace (defined by a democratic system, human rights and free market economy)[21], afraid perhaps of venturing into the areas which might label them as utopians, or socialists. Viable alternatives to this silence are of course not straightforward, but by refusing to name or explore these issues, or incorporate them into its work, the peacebuilding community runs a real risk of becoming complicit in the maintenance of the current, unsustainable global system.

The provisional typology below between vision and practice highlights some of the contrasting approaches used by those working in peacebuilding field. It seems that, with an acceptable degree of oversimplification, one can situate much peacebuilding practice in one of two camps. On the one hand there is work aimed at fundamental political and social change – 'transformative' peacebuilding. On the other is incremental activity, which aims to make a practical difference in a specific domain, without necessarily challenging the deeper context. This can be termed 'technical' peacebuilding. The table below illustrates some of these distinctions.

It is important to note from the outset that, in our experience, the same people tend to find themselves on different sides of the line in different circumstances. This table therefore compares two approaches, not two types of actors, though it is possible that many in the field prefer the technical peacebuilding as more conducive to what they see as a realistic approach.

[21] As defined, for example, by the ongoing 'Liberal Peace and the Ethics of Peacebuilding' research project by the International Peace Research Institute, Oslo. See http://www.prio.no/page/Project_detail/d/9244/49241.html

**Table 1. Contrasting approaches to peacebuilding: 'technical' and 'transformative'**

| | Technical approach | Transformative approach |
|---|---|---|
| **GOALS** | | |
| **Overall purpose** | To end a specific situation / open conflict: 'negative' peace | In addition, to influence the underlying structure and culture as an integrated element in building something better: 'positive' peace |
| **Agenda** | Set by funders and project holders, with some limited consultation with community | Set and continually reviewed with community, in consultation with funders and project holders |
| **Objectives** | Achievement of project objectives | Promoting shared vision of / for community, of which project/programme work is part |
| **Priority** | Content of programme | Solidarity; relationships as well as content |
| **STRATEGY** | | |
| **Focus** | A specific piece of work | Building elements of wider change into a specific piece of work |
| **Evaluation** | Focus on efficiency, project successes | Efficiency plus bigger picture impact |
| **Learning** | Downplaying failures | Taking failures as starting points; inclusion of self-reflection and action learning |
| **Issues** | Solve presenting issues | Expand, change, transcend contested issues |
| **Theory of change** | Implicit: change in immediate situation will ripple out | Explicit: developed in relation to analysis and systems thinking |
| **Scope** | One level, one sector | Multi-level, local-global, alliances across sectors |
| **Time horizon** | Duration of project (plus follow-up) | Medium to long term |
| **VALUES** | | |
| **Accountability** | Primarily, in practice, to funders | Primarily to identified partners / community |
| **Whose peace?** | Power relations are unchangeable: need to accommodate | Peace is for whole community, especially the weakest: option to work to change power relations if better future requires it |
| **Self image** | A professional doing a good job of work | Agent of change, modelling struggle and transformation |
| **ANALYSIS** | | |
| **Context** | Project and work-focussed, done by project staff | Adds ongoing conflict analysis and future scenario planning, all undertaken with wider community |
| **Actors** | Good working relationship | In addition, works for change of perspective, goals, heart, will, inclusive sense of identity |
| **View of violence** | Prevent and defuse it; ambivalent about its use | Race, gender and class dimensions are integral part of violence; transforming the energy into positive outcomes; active promotion of nonviolent approaches |
| **View of conflict** | A problem in the way of achieving goals | Inevitable, an opportunity for development and change, consider options to intensify |

It is interesting to note that roughly two thirds of the headings above can actually be seen as complementary, not contrasting. In these cases, a technical approach can lead on to, or contain within it, a transformative one. For example, under 'priority' it requires only a shift of emphasis to include a conscious focus on building relationships as an adjunct to addressing the explicit content or task. This framework then demonstrates that we do not necessarily need to be more large-scale or global in scope. The seeds of transformation can be sown in the smallest pieces of 'technical' peace work, if only we are creative and courageous.

Incidentally, development practitioners may see a parallel in the long-running and sometimes acrimonious debate about the relationship between humanitarian relief and development. In the former case, it is argued, a task is to be done, a humanitarian imperative to be followed. The counterargument says that no action involving human beings can be solely technical, there are social relations involved in every intervention and they can be damaged or enhanced by the action. This has stimulated further thinking on how relief can be done in a developmental way.

Still, some key elements in the table are almost inevitably at odds with each other. These point to choices which may have a major impact on the direction the initiative takes: whose agenda is it, who are we accountable to, whose peace are we working for?

It seems to the authors that most organisations in the peacebuilding community are focussed on 'technical' peacebuilding. Development organisations which adopt a peacebuilding perspective tend also to follow the same trend, often limiting their options to conflict sensitivity, which in many ways resonates with the 'technical' approach.

Of course such a typology is oversimplified, but there may be some value in looking at the activity in our organisations and our field in this way if we are concerned with impact and big picture change. It might for example direct us to think about the obstacles to bringing transformative elements more to the fore. This would necessarily involve us in thinking about who is doing what in each of these columns. Are we talking of insiders or outsiders? If the latter, there is an argument that outsiders will do less harm if they stick to their technical expertise and do not try to transform situations they do not know from the inside out. If this is so, how can they do this without limiting the initiative of insiders?

Other issues arising from such a discussion might include the roles that bureaucracy plays in stunting the personal commitment of people and teams. And there are implications for the role of professionalisation and what it is deemed to signify in the context of peace. Is the current view of professionalism consistent with transformative practice?

**Case study 3. Search for Common Ground's programme on 'Women and Governance' in Burundi – what makes a project genuinely transformative?**

Search for Common Ground (SFCG) started working in Burundi in 1995, in the aftermath of Rwanda's genocide. Its project on 'Women and governance' was launched in 2004, aiming to increase women's participation in political processes at the municipal, provincial and national levels. This was done through providing support to women's associations throughout the country. Capacity-building activities ranged from inter-ethnic meetings, to training in conflict resolution, leadership, organisational development and civic education, to awareness-raising through media.

In 2006 it undertook an external evaluation of this programme, which revealed that because much of it was implemented in the period preceding Burundi's elections, which took place in June 2005, the programme's focus shifted towards women's participation in elections, and largely overlooked work on municipal and province-level influencing.

One of the clearly transformative aspects of the programme was that it intentionally targeted different levels: from grassroots women's reconciliation to attempts to establish a national women's lobbying network. However the project scope (140 associations throughout the country) was probably too wide to aim for an in-depth impact. Ultimately it proved impossible to organise the national network, but because of the focus on the national level, organising smaller municipality-level lobby group did not materialise either.

Following the evaluation, a number of modifications were introduced to the second stage of the project, such as restructuring the country programme to merge women and youth work; narrowing the number of

beneficiary associations and the number of provinces targeted; strengthening staff's training skills and improving the project's monitoring framework. However, none of these seem to specifically address the issue of engaging women in political processes at municipality / provincial levels.

This example raises questions as to the orientation of a programme run by an INGO. In what circumstances can opportunities for a more transformative approach be accepted? What then constitutes its legitimacy? If it remains at the technical level, how does it minimise the risk of reinforcing a potentially unjust and unstable system of governance? It is worth noting that SFCG uploaded an external assessment undertaken in 2006 and its staff's response to it on the website. This is a rare practice of openness among peacebuilding organisations and is potentially transformative in itself.

*Sources:'Key Findings from 2006 "Women and Governance" Project Evaluation' (http://www.sfcg.org/sfcg/evaluations/womengovkey.pdf); Burundi Programme Overview (http://www.sfcg.org/programmes/burundi/pdf/burundi.pdf)*

Why does it all matter? Well, one reason is that the technical approach on its own is unlikely to help change the wider system. In fact, as we suggested above, it may well serve to reinforce the unstable and inherently unjust status quo – all in the name of sustainable peace. More broadly, this reluctance to spell out what we mean by positive or 'greater' peace and how to get there is potentially disastrous. If we have nothing to say, or more importantly to do, about the way the world is now, what are we really doing? Our projects may simply hang in empty space. And such a position is manifestly self-defeating, because the ever more prosperous way of life apparently on offer as a result of the peace we are building is a chimera, never achievable, as the planet creaks under the weight of both rampant consumerism of many, and the struggle for survival of millions more.

### 3.2 Attitudes to power: deference deters transformation

There are grassroots organisations and movements in this field which have no problem with addressing vested interests and structures. Resistance to violence and injustice is often the prime reason they came into being. Struggle and a degree of hardship are part of their life; nonviolent direct action and imprisonment are not unusual.

When they team up with INGOs, they often expect them to take an equally robust attitude to their own governments and other vested interests located in their countries of origin. In this they get frequently disappointed. INGOs behave altogether differently – in what they themselves see as a professional manner. Research, dissemination of information, advocacy and argument are their tools of trade. Letters, meetings and reports are used to press a case. If and when this is refused as it often is, little more can be done. Resistance and nonviolent action are only used by small, relatively fringe organisations. Partnerships between CSOs engaged in civil disobedience and Northern-based INGOs seem relatively rare.

This, however, is inevitably a generalisation. One can think of cases when Northern-based INGOs have supported resistance *sub rosa*, and protected partners when their lives were at risk. For example, throughout the appalling violence in Central America in the 1980s, Oxfam kept no paper documentation that could be dangerous if it fell into the wrong hands. Reports were made orally to central committee meetings. Only when change came, was the whole experience written up. [22] Security concerns might have limited what INGOs now feel they can do – but there is still need for support for brave people resisting injustice in difficult circumstances.

[22] Walker, Bridget. Comments on the draft of this paper, December 2007.

This disparity between the apparent level of commitment between INGOs and local CSOs is often justified by suggesting that CSOs are on the frontline, while INGOs are backing them up. Such a position is hardly justifiable in a world where peacebuilders everywhere are adopting a systemic approach to their analysis of violence. In a globalised world we, all of us, are on the frontline of major world issues. It may be more obvious if the frontline happens to be a firing line as well, but political decisions which dictate the exclusion of parties from talks, or the tariffs on imported goods, are made on the frontline too, and in the name of citizens of those countries.

So why do INGOs do not take on their governments, or risk their livelihoods, in support of the causes espoused by their local partners? One reason may be that it is simply, and naturally, not sufficiently a matter of life and death to them. Another may be down to what processes guide the internal operation of INGOs and to who makes decisions on these matters. In some agencies there is disagreement on the message for public consumption on the home patch between programme departments, which tend to favour confrontation and protest, and policy departments which take a more 'soft' stance.

A further reason may be the increasing interchangeability and inter-relationship of government and INGOs staff in some countries. In Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban, a quarter of the cabinet were from civil society. At least one went on to become an ambassador. In many other countries civil society provides a natural rung on the ladder into politics. In the UK, Oxfam workers have been seconded to DFID and FCO or moved over into government. The former head of policy at Oxfam is to become ambassador to Cuba. Is this creative thinking on the part of government, or a sell out from the agency side, or just different sides of the same coin?

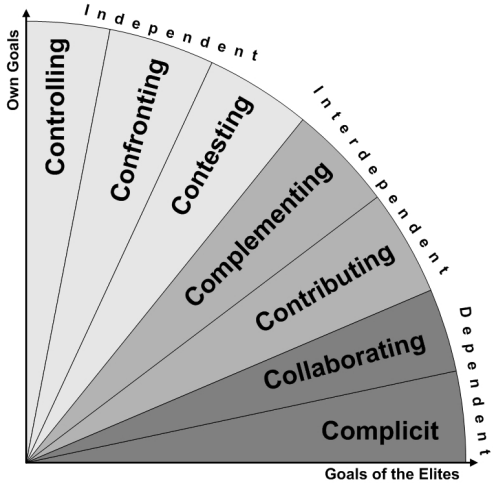
Above all, perhaps, there is the issue of power. With few exceptions, INGOs defer as a matter of course to their governments: they normally do not oppose them, especially in public, or risk disagreements over anything significant. After all, these governments are supposed to be democratic, and so should not be opposed beyond the somewhat genteel limits of democratic dissent, even when they act in blatantly undemocratic ways. Even when the invasion of Iraq loomed in 2003, and huge numbers of UK citizens marched against it in the streets, UK-based INGOs did not come together and take a public position against it. They have not been in the forefront of any subsequent moves to hold the political leaders publicly responsible.

These contrasting roles of CSOs and INGOs in relation to government and other powerful groups in their own societies are intriguing, and arguably a source of major weakness, especially when seen within the concept of 'equal partnership' so often espoused. Indeed it raises questions about the nature of partnership itself, which is so often taken for granted and yet frequently serves merely as a veneer on highly asymmetrical relationships, whether between international and local civil society, or between governments and INGOs. It might help in part to explain the weakness of joined-up (grassroots to top) peacebuilding work, and the tensions evident in many North-South partnerships.

The diagram below[23] identifies a range of relationships which one can observe that civil society has with the controlling power elites in their societies. These reflect the salience of the goals of each party in the context of their perceived relative power.

[23] Adapted and developed from Barnes, Catherine. Weaving the Web: Civil Society Roles in working with conflict and building peace. In: People Building Peace II: Successful Stories of Civil Society, Lynne Rienner, 2005. The original version of this framework was developed by participants in a workshop in 2003 in which Andy Carl and Simon Fisher took an active role.

**Diagram 1. Civil society relations with power elites: a spectrum of options**




***Complicit:*** when civil society is a silent party to decisions made by government, and is seen to be such by outsiders. Unless, that is, it makes strenuous efforts to disassociate itself.

***Collaborating:*** when civil society implements political or economic policies and programmes, often through legally binding contracts, in which the funding is entirely provided by government or business.

***Contributing:*** when civil society participates in policy dialogues and recommendations for appropriate responses to situations and issues.

***Complementing (mid-point in spectrum):*** when civil society works in parallel as separate entities within the same system or situation, neither supporting nor opposing.

***Contesting:*** when civil society challenges government actions, priorities and behaviour, probably in private, perhaps by lobbying alternative models and processes.

***Confronting:*** when civil society challenges government openly and assertively on policy and behaviour (e.g. demonstrations, public campaigns), using evidence of the consequences of current policies.

***Controlling:*** when civil society mobilises and asserts its power to the maximum to radically change both policy and practice. This can in its ultimate form include attempts to change governments and regimes.

It can be helpful to use this framework to map civil society relationships with either or both government and business in a particular situation. These will of course depend on factors such as the nature and policy of the government in question and the values and vision of civil society actors. Where there is a substantial degree of independence and a wide spread of values, one could expect to see a significant number of relationships which fall into all categories, except perhaps the last: controlling.

In relation to the different roles and relationships of local and international organisations, this paper suggests that while both overlap in the interdependent category, peacebuilding and related CSOs tend to fall in the independent / interdependent categories vis-à-vis their governments, while INGOs largely tend to be dependent. Yet analytically both groups would have similar access to entry points for change and both are 'on the frontline'.

In doing such a mapping one also has to note the gap between appearance and reality. Particularly in oppressive situations, local civil society organisations may adopt, of necessity, a position of apparent external complicity, while covertly adopting a more independent, contesting role. It is an open and valid question how much this applies in less oppressive, more democratic settings, but it may well be present to a degree. It is also worth noting that insiders are always likely to be better informed than outsiders, and to be best placed in any decisions about what leeway there is for adopting a more assertive approach.

### *3.2.1 The role of funding*

The unnamed 'elephant in the room' so far has been funding. This issue arguably affects INGOs differently, but remains powerful in determining policy and deterring transformative approaches. Most INGOs in the specifically peacebuilding sector do not generate their own financial resources to any significant extent. When one looks at the huge increase in their size and activity since the early 1990s, it comes as no surprise that this has been engineered largely through funding made available by Western governments, who have come to see the success of this sector as critical to their own foreign policy objectives. INGOs and CSOs alike may have their own views about cause and effect, but when faced with large amounts of money to undertake work which implies acceptance of the current structures of a conflict, such as in the Middle East at the moment, where UK government policy explicitly excludes working with some of the key players in the conflict, labelled as terrorists[24], the temptation is too high for many. Further, the UK and EU guidelines currently being developed for preventing terrorist abuse of CSOs are likely to further undermine this work by aligning it with the political agendas of the 'War on Terrorism', creating excessive bureaucracy and reducing the scope of programmes and partnerships.[25] There are few prizes for an assertive, principled position.

A further important restraint in this regard can be the national law. In the UK, for example, connections to 'terrorists' (i.e. groups on the UK government's proscribed list) are considered one of the 'zero-tolerance issues', by the Charity Commission[26], limiting the agencies' freedom of manoeuvre. This is, however, not a new problem – in the 1970s support to South Africa liberation movement was sometimes seen as support to terrorism, as exemplified by a *Daily Mail's* article entitled 'Blood Money'.[27] This did not deter them and need not do so now.

In this situation of largely monopoly funding, accountability is increasingly directed to the funder, despite the rhetoric, not to those in the front line of struggle. This in turn induces a culture of caution: only successes are reported in any detail, though failures are inevitably frequent and are often the most fertile arena for learning. A notable exception in the UK is the system of block grants given by government to large charities, which allow a considerable degree of freedom and encourage reporting on the processes of learning. But the fact that only large charities can benefit from such grants does reduce the impact of this form of funding on smaller agencies, which mostly make up the peace sector at this point. They are no less productive and perhaps have greater need of the flexibility it offers.

The dependence on the ubiquitous logframe also means that implementers are often unable to respond to unfolding events, as they did not predict them at the outset. Certainly, logframe analysis at its best can enable planners and activists to sketch out a framework in which everything clearly hangs together. However, the way it is often used in relation to funding leads to compartmentalisation of precisely those factors that in the peace field need to be observed in interaction with one another. Thus a useful planning tool gets turned into a mechanism whereby each issue is treated separately, and risks losing its meaning in the evolving picture of a conflict.

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[24] The list of proscribed terrorist groups currently includes 44 organisations (14 of which in Northern Ireland). The list can be accessed at http://security.homeoffice.gov.uk/legislation/current-legislation/terrorism-act-2000/proscribed-terrorist-groups?version=1

[25] Hearson, Martin. Collateral damage: NGO beneficiaries could be the next casualties of the war on terror. The Networker, BOND, February 2008, Available at http://www.bond.org.uk/networker/2008/February/Networker78.pdf

[26] The Home Office & HM Treasury's Review of Safeguards to Protect the Charitable Sector (England and Wales) from Terrorist Abuse: The Charity Commission's Response to the Consultation, August 2007. Available at http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk/supportingcharities/terror.asp

[27] Funding Conflict Transformation: Money, Power and Accountability. Committee for Conflict Transformation Support Review 25, November 2004. Available at http://www.c-r.org/ccts/ccts25/seminar_report.htm

Following from the section above, one might observe that with the rise of government or private spending on peacebuilding and related issues such as rights and development, civil society's relationship with the elites has tended to fall progressively into the dependent category. This is hardly surprising, perhaps, but it does highlight the trade-off between resourcing and the realisation of the full spread of peacebuilding vision and values. If the outcome is that truly transformative approaches by INGOs are rare, at least partially because governments are by their nature unlikely to favour deep-seated change, then the moral cost of funding to the peacebuilding field as a whole is high indeed.

As for development and related INGOs, there is a number who are larger in size and have a mixed portfolio of funding from the general public and business, in addition to that of government. While government priorities are no doubt still influential here, these INGOs also face a heavy task of cultivating a suitable public image. Public willingness to support more transformative approaches thus becomes one of their constraints in relation to peacebuilding. How can that awareness and support be built? And do these agencies themselves actually wish to do so?

Overall, for many smaller peacebuilding CSOs with less access to a range of income sources, civil society-based peace work often becomes dominated or skewed by their relations with funders, and risks therefore being undermined both in reality and in public perception.

**Case study 4. Centre for Nonviolent Action, Balkans – principles and funding**

The Centre for Nonviolent Action (CNA) is a local peace organisation focussing on cross-border work throughout Balkans. It was founded after the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina and started its work in Sarajevo in 1997. In 2001 it opened its second office in Belgrade, Serbia.

CNA's peacebuilding work aims 'to contribute to building fair and just societies'. Its tools include training in nonviolence and conflict transformation, support to peacebuilders, and publishing and film production. In training, it works with those who can multiply the effect (teachers, journalists, activists, social workers, youth workers, and political party activists, with a specific focus on rural areas), but also with those who are sometimes defined as 'spoilers' but in fact can be forces for peace, such as associations of ex-combatants and families of missing persons.

CNA openly acknowledges the tensions and dilemmas associated with support by external donors. Entering a funding relationship should, it believes, be guided by the organisation's values, integrity and independence. Organisations need to be fully aware of the degree of compromise that a particular funding relationship entails, and its own capacity to criticize or challenge a donor (or country) it receives funding from. Failure to do so undermines the standing of the whole peacebuilding field. For example, in expression of the disagreement with US policy, CNA has made a public decision not to accept funding from US government.

Decisions like these, however, are making it more difficult for CNA to deal with some of the key obstacles in its work. As CNA admits, 'the main challenge lies in the stirring of this "local" pro-peace energy into constructive action and attitude and in making it visible'. Sustaining energy and commitment among staff and wider networks has been a constant challenge: people burn out, lose their motivation or get frustrated by lack of support in their personal or professional environment, even when there is sufficient interest in and support for a spin-off idea; inability to secure funding exacerbates this even further.

*Adapted from: Vukosavljevic, Nenad. Training for Peacebuilding and Conflict Transformation. Experiences of the "Centre for Nonviolent Action" in the Western Balkans. Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation, 2007. Available at http://www.berghof-handbook.net/uploads/download/vukosavljevic_handbook.pdf*

### 3.3 Jealous autonomy: organisational rivalry restricts joined-up strategies

The third main factor which seems to be holding the peacebuilding community back from achieving its potential is a lack of cooperation, both horizontally and vertically. Peacebuilders preach, or at least teach, about working together and the virtues of cooperative problem-solving in the delivery of their programmes, but the reality is often markedly different.

As indicated at the start of this paper, while the key issues of violence and war, economic injustice and poverty, denial of rights / participation and environmental degradation are analytically distinct, the way they manifest in the world is interconnected. They are not separate problems, each requiring their own pressure groups and discrete interventions; on the contrary, they are inextricably intertwined. Major areas of intractable violence all over the world are self-evidently a mix of these factors, be that Sudan (Darfur), Israel / Palestine, Burma, Colombia or others. If environmental or peace issues are pursued in isolation from the others, the action risks being at best ineffective, and at worst all get exacerbated. Yet much of the world, and civil society, persists in seeing and treating each as distinct.

That is not to say there are no significant joint efforts.[28] Of course there are, but they are almost always round a specific piece of work, and usually rooted in joint funding of some kind – which, as discussed above, often substantially limits the scope of cooperation. Coalitions of INGOs across these issues which are seriously intent on developing and implementing common strategies are still a rarity. In-depth cooperation has been missing both globally and in-country.

Globally there is no agreed forum, real or virtual, where agencies meet and mingle around the themes of peacebuilding and conflict transformation. As a result, the differences become hardened around loyalties to particular institutions or figures and the synergies are not realised. This may be one reason why peace work has yet to develop its own international codes of conduct and standards, and patchy quality remains acceptable in many places.

On a country level, one can find a plethora of cases where local and international peacebuilding organisations and governments are working on a specific approach to a 'hot' conflict but do not check who else is active, let alone coordinate their activities. This risks an overlap, which can become damaging and be used by the protagonists to their advantage. For example, in the experience of one of the authors, at one point in the Northern Uganda peace negotiations there were at least eight institutional players engaged in mediation, most of whom had no knowledge of others. In these cases the interest or intention may often be there, but is simply not followed through due to pressure of events and perhaps organisational agendas.

A similar absence of cooperation can often be observed in regions where conflict is endemic and of low intensity, when both local and international organisations with different areas of expertise do not take the time to check out who is doing what and how their respective activities might reinforce each other to reduce the drivers of violence. There is perhaps a particular gap between peace and environmental groups, neither of whom seem as yet to fully realise how their respective work is mutually dependent.

This narrow field of vision is often combined with a 'programme' view of peace, which assumes a connection between the success of a particular programme and the advancement of a bigger vision for peace and wellbeing in the area. Many organisations lack an explicit theory of change –

[28] Some of the examples of both cooperative initiatives and failures to cooperate in the disarmament field can be found in Atwood, David. NGOs and Multilateral Disarmament Diplomacy: Limits and Possibilities. In: Borrie, J. and V. Martin Randin (eds) Thinking Outside the Box in Multilateral Disarmament and Arms Control Negotiations , UNIDIR, 2006. Available at http://www.unidir.org/pdf/articles/pdf-art2580.pdf

an understanding of the way in which their work contributes to change in the broader context – and when they do have this, it is still rare that the vision comes from the people of the area.

Even in cases where INGOs are based in the same home country or region with easy access to each other, they often do not find the time to explore learning and synergies between them on an ongoing basis. This is changing in some areas as work on influencing government policy develops, but the culture of secrecy which exists about most activities where there are problems severely limits the extent of the learning.

Without more joined-up work, there is a risk that peacebuilding will not be able to move beyond isolated programmes, successful or not in their own terms, and thus ultimately will not affect the overall situation.

**Case study 5. African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes – where are the connections?**

The African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) is a South African organisation established in 1991 and working throughout Africa 'to bring creative African solutions to the challenges posed by conflict on the continent'. Its activities include training in topics ranging from interpersonal conflict resolution to international peacekeeping; policy and advocacy; exchanges and dialogues; and research and publishing. It produces a wide range of publications, available online, from a quadrennial 'Conflict Trends Magazine', to biannual academic 'African Journal of Conflict Resolution', to a series of Occasional Papers and books on peacebuilding in the African context.

ACCORD's website lists an impressive range of innovative activities, implemented in the framework of its own programmes or at the invitation of others. What is more difficult to see is why and how these programmes emerged and were prioritized, how various activities were linked or coordinated, what was their content and what difference they ultimately made.

For example, ACCORD's 'Training for Peace in Africa' programme includes training civilian peacekeeping and peacebuilding personnel, research and publishing, and policy development. Through this and earlier programmes ACCORD has trained 12 thousand people from throughout Africa – civil servants, businesspeople, military, police and civil society. What is less evident is the way in which this training programme contributed to or benefitted from the organisation's other engagements; what links and alliances were made with other organisations; and ultimately, how this work affected the bigger picture. With this undoubtedly excellent organisation, as with others, a major challenge is to be able to demonstrate such linkages, and spell out publicly the theory of change on which its work is based.

*Source: www.accord.org.za*

### 3.4 Depth of expertise: lack of imaginative investment in a competent cadre

A further factor holding back the development of the peacebuilding field is, we believe, a critical shortage (compared for example to the development field) of experienced people, both inside a conflict and outside it, with the level of skills necessary to deal creatively and successfully with complex conflict issues. The lack of such people in sufficient numbers often, in our experience, does not allow for genuinely transformative work to be carried through. There are of course leaders who emerge within every crisis with courage and commitment; they, however, often lack the necessary support, and get bypassed after the initial stages.

This may seem an odd statement given that over the past 20 years there has been a huge expansion of both NGO-based training programmes and academic courses in peace studies and related subjects. NGOs offer a plethora of opportunities for basic training in conflict skills, from 2-3 days to several weeks in duration. These are naturally variable in quality, but the best offer a

mix of experience-based, practical methods which draw on the best of current adult education practice to introduce people to basic elements of peacebuilding and give them a chance to contribute their own expertise as they learn from others.

However, if we look at the needs of those working on intractable conflicts in many parts of the world, at all levels, insiders and outsiders, it is clear that peace*builders* and change*makers* need a range of skills and knowledge which are not met through the current range of opportunities for training and support. Most of these courses are inevitably superficial, with little follow-through or tangible impact. Often they take their place alongside other introductory courses fitted into a heavy schedule, without being integrated into the strategies and plans of their organisations' work. Thus it is not surprising that, with donor fatigue setting in, it becomes even harder to fund peacebuilding training.

But when people want to develop their skills beyond this basic level to greater specialisation and sophistication, the options shrink. Training for trainers is sometimes seen to fulfil this need, but it rarely goes beyond the same introductory level. The only route for most is through university courses in peace studies, conflict resolution and related subjects. These are of course invaluable for many people who are looking for deeper knowledge and awareness of aspects of the peace and conflict field. They are an important element in the growth of the field as a whole, but are not necessarily suited for change agents, for whom the *how* is as crucial as the *what*. Peacebuilders surely need more experience-based, participative, practical approaches, to a higher level of complexity, which include theory in all its dimensions, and test it continuously against the reality of the learner-practitioners.

University courses, while they may contain the full range of ideas and theories, including the most radical, tend still to offer a learning process which is largely conservative and hardly adjusted to what we now know about how adults learn best. In particular, the learning is usually not applied in any tangible sense. The task of the learner, at least until the graduate level, often remains to imbibe and investigate what is deemed important by the institution and to present that back in a form which can be readily assessed by university examiners. The creation of knowledge and theory by students below postgraduate degree level is not deemed to be an appropriate or feasible task in many institutions. With notable exceptions, the exploration of change, and the process of bringing that about, is rarely undertaken, and when it is, it tends to be from an abstract point of view, largely unconnected to students' life and work.

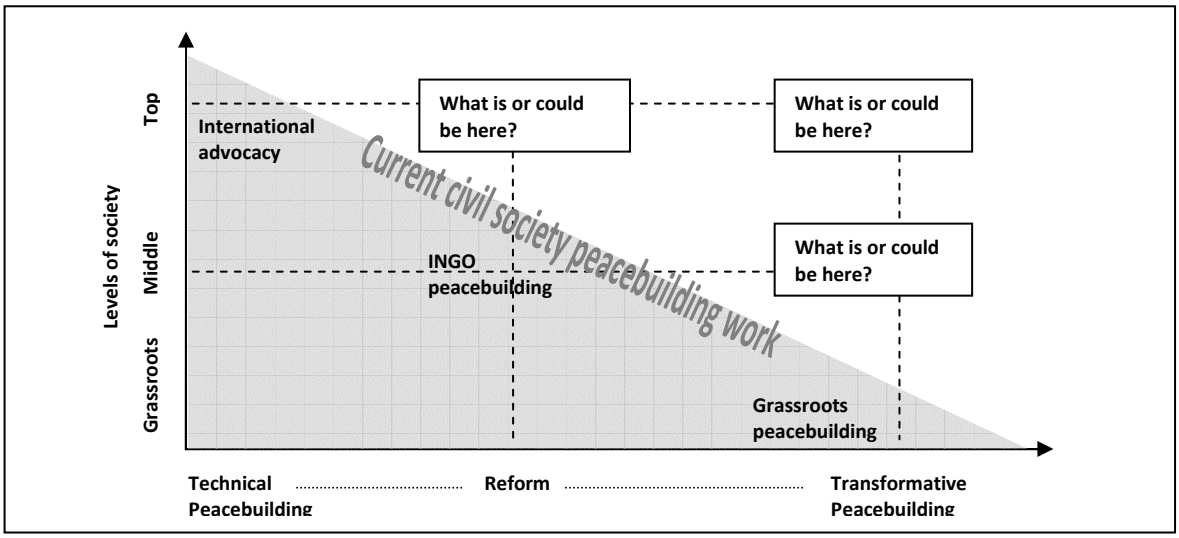
This often has unfortunate effects for activist peacebuilders. Having accepted to take a course in higher education (because it was the only option available, and perhaps because they have been given a scholarship), they find their aspirations not responded to and sometimes undermined. Not infrequently, having come back from a distant university course, they find themselves unable to re-establish the relationships and trust they once enjoyed, and end up switching to research or bureaucratic work. This process not only deprives their communities of leadership, but also reinforces the notion that the only valid researchers are those based in universities, usually far from the conflict they are writing or theorising about. Thus the pioneering work of hands-on peace workers – who, in seeking more effective ways to address violence in all its aspects, inevitably undertake research too – is for the most part lost to the field.

It is a critical problem for the peacebuilding community. Civil society needs to invest in second-level, value-based training and capacity-building in creative partnerships with universities and other learning institutions who are willing to explore new methods, and enable their students to engage more proactively with social and political issues. One of the ways to take it forward is likely to be the introduction of an action learning methodology, combining action research and self-reflection with intellectual rigour.

### 3.5 Mind the gap?

The sum of the four factors described above inevitably curtails real change, both in policy and in practice. Even where our values suggest the need for transformative action, we often fall back on technical approaches. The result is a lack of transformative work – work that would reach below the surface issues and seek to affect the underlying dynamics which brought about the manifestations of violence in the first place – at crucial levels, including that of political decision-making. The diagram below indicates where the 'technical' approaches tend to predominate, and where transformative work seems most lacking.

**Diagram 2. Civil society and transformative peacebuilding: gaps and options**




When INGOs aspire to extend their work 'upwards' in a society, the tendency is to become less radical, more conventional, due perhaps to a natural deference or the assumption that such a tactic is necessary in order to be heard.

If we acknowledge that for peace to be sustainable we need to incorporate some radical changes in the current world order into our work and vision, then we would have to address the apparent lack of significant interventions, especially at middle and higher levels, in favour of far-reaching change. In particular this lack may mean that, as peacebuilders work to establish different policies at higher political level, they will not be able to adequately resource their adoption.

In summary, a discomforting conclusion looms: INGOs seem to be palpably weak and ineffective as peacebuilders, and poor partners for their local colleagues who face the heat of often violent and protracted oppression and conflict. In the face of the unsustainable and unjust world order, their banners of 'sustainable peace' might amount to little more than a delusion. Those 'on the front line' might even consider them fraudulent.

Why should this be so, when at the same time the peacebuilding community is full of well-motivated, committed people? One possibility is that many do see these contradictions but do not act on them, for pragmatic reasons.

# Chapter Four. An Agenda for transformative peacebuilding?

This paper started by briefly outlining the current global crisis and the opportunity this presents to the field of peacebuilding and conflict transformation. It went on to outline some of the advances made over the past twenty years at different levels, as people have searched for more cooperative, less violent solutions.

But there is a long way to go to realise the full potential of the field, from grassroots to high politics. The previous chapter focussed on the role of civil society peacebuilding, and set out some of the main constraints for peacebuilders who seek to generate credible alternatives to the destructive ways in which intractable national and international conflicts are currently addressed, and to develop expertise and the necessary depth for the essential shifts to be made.

These shifts will almost certainly require more research, linked to clearer articulation of the emerging alternative(s), skilful engagement with the wider public, and determined lobbying, especially perhaps in political and business circles. They will also need to be underpinned and resourced by people across the world who are able to embody, advocate, guide and resource the implementation of new policy directions. Powerful ideas without practical backup risk being unfairly discredited.

Somehow a tipping point must be reached, where this can start to happen. There are tantalising signs of what could be, if peacebuilders can mobilise imagination and their own power, and reach out to their natural allies. Two areas, we suggest, need to be addressed simultaneously: what we can do, and what we can say. This chapter seeks to sketch out some responses and invites the readers' engagement.

## 4.1 What can we do? – an Agenda

### *4.1.1 Accountability*

*In response to internal divisions, there is a need to re-instate communities and their wellbeing unambiguously at the heart of our priorities. How can this enable an inspiring yet practical vision to emerge again?*

Looking closely at who INGOs are accountable to in reality, it is often much more to funders and governments than to the people they work with and the communities they serve. Project proposals are, due to understandable practical constraints, often made with minimal consultation between local CSOs and INGOs; instead, a wealth of discussion between an INGO and a funding body, governmental or private, culminates in a logframe. This does not sit easily alongside a commitment to positive peace, justice and wellbeing of people and their communities. How would practice change if these unambiguously became central priorities? How would it look like, for example, if INGOs encouraged local partners to set and monitor their own change agendas, and accompanied them as needed, rather than the reverse, which so often happens now?

In addition to this 'vertical' accountability, peacebuilders could see themselves more readily as connecting horizontally in time:

- *to the past* – to those who have struggled for peace and justice, often paying with their lives, as well as those who laid the intellectual and practical basis for the field and the very concept of peace.

- *to the future* – to those who will build on what will have been achieved, hopefully with increasing success.

### *4.1.2 Global issues*

*In response to the perceived narrowness of vision, there is a need to integrate peacebuilding efforts with those addressing other major threats to survival and security. What does this mean for our vision of sustainable peace?*

Mainstream politics at global as well as national level marginalises human values. Political processes often seem bereft not only of integrity but of any sense of urgency in the face of an already manifesting global crisis. Such politics makes conflict transformation at best an uphill struggle, however strong or weak the field of peacebuilding itself is; mitigating the effects is no longer an adequate goal.

At the same time, peace, as we have seen, cannot be separated from economic justice, or environmental issues, or human rights, including the right to participate in public affairs. In order to have a transformative, not simply technical impact on policies, a new kind of politics needs to evolve at all levels, one that is built on the values of respect, care and cooperation[29] and that challenges the current power disparities that distort and divide societies, including those associated with wealth, gender and race.

One of the implications of building such a change is that economic analysis will need to play a much larger role in conflict analysis. If so much of the way the world works is driven by the global market and the corporations that dominate it, these must clearly feature more in our understanding of why things are as they are, and in our theories of change. This may in turn necessitate an increasing willingness to challenge the behaviour of market capitalism, well beyond corporate social responsibility, where this bears down on the communities by whom, and for whom, the struggle for peace is taking place. It may well mean being more willing to build alliances with those who are creating social and political alternatives, whether through popular movements or more local initiatives and structures.

At national and international levels this will certainly mean that INGOs will have to start serious conversations with others working on different issues. In so doing they will inevitably need to rethink and restate what they mean by positive / greater / sustainable peace. And they will need to start taking their potential in shaping the future more seriously.

The UK government's geo-strategic forecasters recently produced a review of strategic trends in the next 30 years, which depicted the global future as fraught with dangers and risks, arising from issues such as population and resources, identity and interest, governance and order, and knowledge and innovation.[30] The recommended responses are largely along the lines of 'getting there first': if only 'we' keep ahead of the game, 'we' will stay safe. But doing so will inevitably involve restricting the rights of citizens, in the interests of national security, and risks further exacerbating those same dangers it tries to address.

The absence of imaginative, future-oriented policy-making, found in many places at governmental levels, is ultimately self-defeating. If what it takes to stay safe is to play the same game better

[29] Francis, Diana. A project to transform policy, starting in the UK. CCTS Review 35, November 2007, p.7. Available at http://www.c-r.org/ccts/ccts35/review35.pdf
[30] The DCDC Global Strategic Trends Programme 2007-2036. Available at http://www.dcdc-strategictrends.org.uk/

than the 'enemy', are we not simply speeding up a deadly game to the point of mutual destruction?

The challenge is out there now. How can peacebuilders resist such pessimism about the future and respond to the need for a better way to manage difference and disagreement that is evident both in politics and elsewhere? For example, could there be a cooperative effort to research and publish a formal response to the above-mentioned review?

**Case study 6. Picking up the emerging themes – International Alert and International Crisis Group**

Peacebuilding organisations have indeed begun to link up with emerging global issues. For example, in response to the threat of climate change, the International Crisis Group has compiled a database of resources on climate change and conflict, and International Alert has produced a report on the links between climate change, peace and war. Still, these are only initial steps, yet to be built upon.

These two organisations have also attempted to explore the role of energy competition and multinational corporations in conflict. For example, International Alert contributed to the development of 'Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights', a set of principles on business practice aiming 'to guide companies in balancing the needs for safety while respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms' in three areas: risk assessment, relations with public security, and relations with private security. Such efforts however tend to stop at assessing and mitigating the risks associated with climate change and economic activity in an unsafe environment, and are yet to address the systemic connections between these factors and their contribution to global conflict.

*Sources: www.crisisgroup.org, www.international-alert.org, www.voluntaryprinciples.org*

### *4.1.3 Empowerment*

*In response to deferential attitudes to power, there is a need to look for ways to empower ourselves, especially in relation to our own governments and business communities. What more can we also do to support the empowerment of our partners, and to disempower those who sustain and promote violence in all its forms?*

It is not possible to be serious about change and stay out of politics. This is often self-evident at the local level. Why is there such reluctance amongst most INGOs to accept that peace is about transforming violence in all its manifestations into practical politics? What will it take for them to take power and politics seriously, especially in their home countries? Unless they do, the main thrust of their programmes is likely to be technical rather than transformative, in the terms of this paper, and thus be ultimately irrelevant to real change.

The need for local empowerment as the centrepiece of analysis and practical work has been long recognised in the development field. Peacebuilding organisations have adopted the same rhetoric, but often fail to honour this at local level. In a world characterised by huge power disparities, changing power relations needs to move to the heart of peace work, at the local as well as global level, encompassing both political and economic structures.

Perhaps this points to a need to develop new and varied forms of power, more cooperative and persuasive, yet highly political and hard-nosed, which would be based on an integrated analysis of global issues. Could this mean a greater willingness to support civil resistance movements – whose record of mobilising political change is much stronger than that of CSOs? Could it mean a renewed interest in, and commitment to, active nonviolence?

There are huge possibilities for expanding this dimension of peacebuilding, including working intensively alongside disaffected groups and those showing civil courage by resisting oppression, defending the rights of nonviolent resisters, and promoting fair and accurate media coverage of nonviolent initiatives and movements. More broadly there is great potential for developing a stronger discourse of nonviolent struggle and to promote this through educational and wider information programmes. [31]

Underlying much of the empowerment issue is of course the question of funding. While it is hard not to admit that the rise of the peacebuilding sector has been due almost entirely to the generosity of Western governments, it is equally hard not to ask whose interests have been principally served up to now. There is, has always been a gap between what governments call peace (stability by another name in many cases) and what grassroots communities want and need (social justice, environmental sustainability and livelihoods at a minimum). This, as we have seen, poses an apparently invidious choice between, on the one hand, maintaining values and adopting a stance that is independent of government but losing most of the current means of survival, and, on the other, receiving government funds at the cost of collective complicity.

It is as well to remember that civil society is already far from powerless in the face of its own governments. It is interesting to ponder, for example. how the UK government would have responded to a unanimous and well publicised position taken by peace, relief and development organisations before the Iraq invasion in 2003 that they would boycott all 'post-conflict' work in that country on the grounds that the invasion was illegal. Many democratic governments have come to need civil society to deliver key aspects of their domestic and foreign policies. Other, more authoritarian regimes can be vulnerable to assertive civil society movements and organisations, who have access to external media and may be in a position to challenge the regime itself. There is no a priori reason why peacebuilders should adopt the apparently co-optive, 'me-too' attitude to government so uncontroversially prevalent at the moment.

In this context, it could be beneficial if peacebuilders came together to look at their relations with government, to explore ways of maximising their collective power and thus developing more symmetrical relationships with the state and other foci of influence.

In so doing they might also want to consider:

- To what extent government funding shapes programming and the organisations that deliver them.
- What work they want to do which is not acceptable or fundable by government or business.
- How it might be possible to become less dependent on government funding.
- The advantages and pitfalls of alternative models of resourcing, including corporate funding.

### *4.1.4 Networks and linkages*

*In response to organisational rivalry, there is a need for joined-up work with others. How can we make the separate elements of peacebuilding add up to more than the sum of its parts?*

Much peacebuilding work, whether local, national or international, consists of separate projects by independent organisations. There is a wealth of successful projects at the local level. However, all too often they remain unconnected to the wider context at the regional and national levels, upon which local peace ultimately depends.

[31] Similar ideas are developed in Merriman, H. and J. DuVall, Dissolving Terrorism at its Roots, in Ram, S. and R. Summy (eds) Nonviolence: An Alternative for Countering Global Terrorism, Hauppauge, NY, Nova Science Publishers, 2007, and in Francis, Diana. People, Peace and Power: Conflict Transformation in Action, Pluto Press, 2002.

There is a range of existing networks and coalitions, of varying quality and effectiveness. How can these be reinvigorated in order to connect work for change at different levels and across the different issues and locations? For genuine peacebuilding to take place, we need to challenge the idea that each organisation is an island seeking its own independent wellbeing, and begin to share information and resources systematically. Building such alliances will create a new source of legitimacy and power.

Peacebuilders sometimes embrace a certain degree of evangelism: an assumption that those on the other side of the divide, so to speak, need to change their values for peace to be built. Not surprisingly, people (and even less institutions) do not easily respond to arguments of this kind. They would probably respond more to arguments based on the evidence that certain approaches are more likely to work than others in given circumstances, and be cheaper to implement. This suggests that it is process – policies, techniques and methods – that may often provide the most acceptable entry-point to other constituencies. In that case it will be vital to find ways to integrate the seeds of transformation within these technical methodologies.

Networks can also be subversive, in the best sense. There is, we believe, a significant number of people in government and business institutions who would like to see their organisations adopt a more creative, values-based approach to peace and conflict, and are in a position to influence policies on these issues if they have the arguments and relevant knowledge to hand. They can be seen as 'insiders', those who are looking for alternatives, can see the advantages of systematic, well-resourced peacebuilding work, and recognise the failures of the dominant control-oriented, militarised paradigm. They are interested to learn how to do things differently, but do not want to buy into a significantly different values system. Nor could they while retaining their jobs. Is this a possible space where informal approaches, either explicit in intent or perhaps based initially on common identities or interests, can lead towards cross-fertilisation of ideas and a gradual change in attitudes and practice?

This would pose a challenge for the peace-building community to collaboratively tease out its collective learning, from failures as well as successes, and articulate it in a practical, jargon-free way for those who are not part of the sector, so that they could understand and make use of it. Would this perhaps call for a single forum, real or virtual, where the different actors and viewpoints in the field can share experience and seek synthesis?

**Case study 7. Connect Four – an initiative to develop a common policy platform in UK**

In July 2006 a small group of peace practitioners in the UK held a consultation with people engaged in the four areas outlined in Chapter 1 above: economic justice, environment, peace and rights. The intention was to test the idea of joined-up thinking between the different fields and between agencies working on the different issues. In a report they wrote:

"The tentative thinking that we shared was that we would begin by elaborating our analysis, through individual and collective thinking and writing, in a variety of contexts, and through the circulation of ideas in different circles, using different forums for dialogue and debate. On the basis of the analysis we reached, we would begin to formulate policies, through similar modes of thought and exchange, and once they were formulated disseminate them more widely, seeking entry points into different circles and institutions.

"What we hoped to achieve during this consultation was first an exploration of the connections between the four fields, as seen by our participants, so that the rationale for cooperation is articulated. The second question we wanted the group to explore together was what kind of initiative – if any – would be productive. This exploration might, we thought, point us to (a) publication(s); to an ongoing or occasional

conversation; to a big joint conference; to joint lobbying; to behind-the-scenes dialogue, or to a unified and concerted campaign. We were open to all possibilities…

"On the day in question an excellent group of some 20 people came together in Oxford and the exploration that took place was rich in analysis and in ideas for popular outreach, as well as for more 'weighty' work to influence policy. The consultation's proceedings were duly written up and circulated to all concerned, and several people expressed interest in ongoing involvement. We felt sufficiently encouraged to apply for much more substantial funding. The proposal we made was still focussed very much on a dialogical process, wheeled out into communities, as well as on more specific working groups related to media, publications and so on. Maybe the proposal was both too lacking in specifics and too ambitious, but we had no success in getting funds to take the idea forward. And negotiations that began with a specific organisation that showed a lively interest in taking on the project ran into the ground…

"The need for a policy initiative of this nature seems even more urgent now than it did then. The potential for a disastrous attack on Iran; the increasing erosion of human rights and civil liberties; the growing gap between the wealthy and the poor and the increasing evidence of the impending devastation of climate change all make the need for change even more urgent."

The initiating group remains active and welcomes ideas to take this thinking forward.

*Adapted from: Francis, Diana. A project to transform policy, starting in the UK. CCTS Review No35, November 2007, available at http://www.c-r.org/ccts/ccts35/francis.htm*

### *4.1.5 Delivering change*

*In response to an over-emphasis on projects, there is a need to raise the level of aspiration and achievement to the bigger picture. How can we deliberately include transformative elements in all peacebuilding work, be that resistance or promoting new initiatives?*

Evaluation and needs assessment have been areas of major progress in recent years. There is now a greater tendency to focus on delivering 'outcomes' of a particular project, and to gain more reliable knowledge on whether they are achieved. But, with the focus on projects, the bigger picture often remains unaffected. Reporting, honest or not, still largely overlooks the effect on the wider context.

There is a need to broaden horizons, and to value process as well as significant outcomes. Peacebuilding is not only about programmes that have impact in their own terms, but also about delivering real transformative change. It is about making sure that programmes connect with, and affect the 'peace writ large'. In doing so, they need to be influencing policies of others, local, national or international, political or economic. What real difference is made? How does one know? Who cares?

Sometimes the impact sought will be not so much about new initiatives as building resilience and resistance, by not allowing political expediency to interfere in a particular situation, or by challenging short-term solutions that have negative long-term implications, or by defending the gains won in previous years. It is also important to keep in mind that the seeds of transformation can be present in any single piece of work, as Table 1 in Chapter 3 demonstrates.

The now well-publicised initiative in the Northern Kenyan district of Wajir during the 1990s to end inter-clan fighting was in its origin just one piece of work, indeed with many technical aspects to ensure that the objective of ending violence was achieved. But it had transformative elements which ensured that its impact went further, both geographically and in time. These elements included the fact that the initiative was led by women, who themselves were members of wider networks; it aimed to include, influence and empower every person who encountered it, including

government figures and intelligence services; it built a cumulative, multilevel infrastructure of peace embodied in the Wajir Peace and Development Committee; and, crucially perhaps, in the initial stages it refused external funding and raised the necessary resources from those involved and from local sympathisers and businesses.

Thus, delivering change is often less about scale than a careful integration of creatively subversive elements into everyday activity. It involves joined-up thinking and conscious linking, both within peacebuilding work and with other sectors, at different levels. It means thinking and planning long-term, and thus moving beyond the project mentality.

### *4.1.6 Action learning*

*In response to the need for a critical mass of highly skilled cadres, there is a need to elicit learning from what practitioners in different fields actually do (and not just say they do), and enable them to apply the insights in practice. How can we make sure our learning enhances our ability to work more systemically for change?*

It is not surprising that peace work produces many unintended outcomes, from positive ones to outright failures. We do not live in a world of linear causes and consequences, yet we often plan as if we did. A systems framework would offer more useful insights into how change happens, but it also requires a high degree of reflexive learning and adaptability, at personal and institutional levels. This calls for a willingness to learn from the work of peacebuilding and other sectors, and bring those insights back into practice. For most organisations this will mean a change of culture towards a more proactive and open sharing of successes and failures, and a greater willingness to plan future work with others.

In addition, there is a need to invest in specially designed education for peacebuilders and changemakers, which would put action learning at its heart. An instructive example in the development field is the participatory rural appraisal (PRA) methodology and its many offshoots. What will it take for peacebuilding organisations to innovate in a similar way, with the conscious aim of taking its constituency to a new level?

**Case study 8. Applied Conflict Transformation Studies – building a pool of reflexive practitioners**

*Rationale: bridging the academic-practitioner divide*
An attempt to bridge the gap between academic programmes and practitioners' needs has been made by the development of Applied Conflict Transformation Studies (ACTS), a programme initiated by UK-based Responding to Conflict (RTC). ACTS is a two-year part-time Masters course in conflict transformation, structured around six modules (Theories of conflict; Conflict, power and change; Transforming violent conflict; Building sustainable peace; Building theory from practice; and Agents for transformation), each consisting of a residential seminar and on-the-job study. It is currently offered in Asia (based in Cambodia), and Balkans and Middle East (based in Serbia).

*Methodology: action learning and research*
At the core of ACTS methodology is action research, combined with the study and testing of conflict theories and the practice of conflict-handling skills. Action research methodology involves repeated cycles of action, reflection and planning with a focus on three levels: the self, or action-researcher, the interactive face-to-face context, and the wider community or society. Action research requires students to start with their own practice, recognising that by being part of an intervention, they will affect the outcome of a situation. It is an approach which encourages developing awareness of one's motivations and values, as well as awareness of others and their perspectives. By reflecting systematically on their work, students gradually develop their own practice and skills. What is their role in working for social and political change? How can they become more effective agents of change and leaders in their organisations and communities?

While action research has a strong focus on the individual, it also requires students to look closely at the work they are doing. When are their programmes successful and why? In what ways do they need to improve? What can their colleagues and organisations learn from their research? And beyond that: what would their research mean for the wider field of conflict transformation? At its best, ACTS enables practitioners to write about their work and practice, challenging and contributing to the field of conflict transformation from the perspective of first hand involvement.

*Structure: global yet local*
ACTS core curriculum is shaped to suit the needs of the particular context; teaching teams are centrally accredited, and are made up of tutors from the region where the course is held and international tutors who bring a wider perspective.

*Reflections*
ACTS is the first, and so far the only university-based conflict transformation course to be centred on action research. It inevitably faces questions about its legitimacy and quality. However the output of the first group of students who graduated in 2007 suggests that action learning can indeed become a more widely recognised mode of education within the field. Yet as ACTS develops, its team keeps asking itself to what extent their overall goal of building a critical mass of reflexive practitioners in strategic areas risks being lost in the process of establishing such global programme.

*Sources: www.globalacts.org, www.respond.org*

In response to the series of challenges outlined in the previous chapter, this chapter has so far set out six main steps to consider, which, through happy circumstance, could constitute an AGENDA:

**A** for Accountability
**G** for Global issues
**E** for Empowerment
**N** for Networking
**D** for Delivering change
**A** for Action learning

### 4.2 What can we say?

While these points indicate possible ways to address the needs of the peacebuilding community, they (or their improved alternatives) will take time to ponder and act on. But arguably we do not have the luxury of time with regard to the current political window of opportunity.

Peacebuilding insights and frameworks continue to be selectively appreciated yet largely ignored in political decision-making, and investment by governments in generating and implementing nonviolent solutions remains limited. Why is this so? Is it because peacebuilding insights are not yet available in a way that can be accessed or adequately implemented in political and policy-making circles? Is there a lack of skilful communication of the lessons learned, or a shortage of political wisdom and clout to get those insights into policy debate, or a failure to address those with vested interests in a militarised view of the world? And what can be done to respond to this moment of opportunity?

A practical step in this direction could be to work towards an integrated policy platform that would seek to articulate policies founded on cooperation, not domination.[32] Such a move could initially bring together a range of civil society organisations, with the aim of sharing and

[32] Eisler, Riane. The Chalice and the Blade: Our History,Our Future. London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1990 and Francis, Diana. *Rethinking War and Peace.* London: Pluto Press 2002.

deepening an analysis that recognises the interconnectedness of the four domains of peace, economic justice, respect for the environment and human rights / political participation. A grouping such as this might in the first instance commit to:

- Researching the interconnections of these issues at different levels;
- Incorporating the resulting insights in their own work and planning;
- Formulating political policies with attention to all four areas;
- Lobbying for the adoption of these policies, within government where possible, and at the same time looking for new ways to advance them outside and beyond government, including the UN, global civil society and platforms such as World Social Forum;
- Helping to publicise the understanding behind this approach as widely as possible.

Such a process could begin in any country, in Europe as much as anywhere, because it is a cluster of countries who have had considerable impact (malign or benign) on the rest of the world in the past, and continues to have it today.

### *4.2.1 Generating political change*

If we are to make big waves, we need to clarify our theories of how political change happens. This is a topic now frequently covered in peacebuilding programmes, but is less often practically addressed at strategic level, especially perhaps by INGOs. Whatever conclusions we reach, it will be vital to work from grassroots 'up' as well as at middle and 'top' levels.

One of the possibilities is to initiate as soon as possible a time-limited process to synthesize and articulate, more effectively than has been done to date, the core experience of practitioners in bringing about joined-up, multilevel change. The outcomes might take a range of forms: a resource for lobbying and campaigning for coherent policy alternatives at governmental and intergovernmental levels; a video or pocket book aimed at the wider public: short, sharp, with clear policy-making options backed up by evidence and rationale. The aim would be to show how adopting these approaches and principles would make life easier for those in decision-making and influencing positions, both domestically and in foreign policy – if such a distinction can be maintained any longer.

Such a process would impel peacebuilders to come together and identify the distinctive insights and alternatives they can realistically provide and advocate for from their knowledge and experience on various areas of policy including, for example, counter-terrorism, climate and the environment, community relations and education.

There would be distinctive opportunities and entry points in different countries. For example, one of the UK's major think-tanks, the Institute for Public Policy Research, is hosting an independent Commission on National Security in the 21st Century, which aims to contribute to assessment, strategic directions and specific policies for UK's national security policy.[33]

The UN offers opportunities for engagement, especially perhaps through the Peacebuilding Commission where, so far, local civil society had limited opportunities to influence policy. Another current process is The Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development, signed in June 2006 and by now endorsed by more than 70 states. It commits its signatories to supporting "initiatives to measure the human, social and economic costs of armed violence, to assess risks and vulnerabilities, to evaluate the effectiveness of armed violence reduction programmes, and to

[33] For more information see http://www.ippr.org/ipprcommissions/?id=2656&tid=2656&node=1

disseminate knowledge of best practices."[34] There is huge scope for the engagement of civil society in turning such laudable sentiments into action, though governments are not universally keen. The Quaker UN Office in Geneva is providing the formal link for civil society to engage with the implementation of the Declaration.

Much of this may sound random, but policy change is more an art than a science. Insiders often say it is a chancy process, in which critical moments of genuine receptivity and openness to change come unpredictably, but when they do, policy-makers will look seriously at whatever is on offer which comes from a credible source and provides answers to their predicament. The viable alternatives at the moment of opportunity can become a policy in a remarkably short time.

When do these critical moments come? Milton Friedman, the economics guru whose disciples have wrought far-reaching and highly contentious change in many societies, wrote: "Only a crisis – actual or perceived – produces real change. When that crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around. That, I believe, is our basic function: to develop alternatives to existing policies, and to keep them alive and available until the politically impossible becomes politically inevitable."[35]

However, political will must also be mobilised. What is known about political influence suggests that the role of experts in the field who have ample information, experience and good argument at their fingertips is vital, but far from enough. There is also a need for at least two other kinds of inputs, rather as the author of Tipping Point[36] suggests:

- People who know people, *networkers,* who can spread the word to 'insiders', and those with influence through their range of contacts in the political world.
- People who know how to persuade: *champions* who can promote these ideas and values so that they become an accepted currency.

With networkers, champions and practitioners coming together in a concerted manner across global civil society, this could bring the main elements essential for generating political will for a different approach, and for developing new structures and processes where current forms of governance resist or fall short.

The relationship between civil society and state-level policy-makers is, and should be, inherently a difficult one. But it will at least become less characterised by dependency as and when policy-makers begin to recognise that there is useful, applicable, cost-saving knowledge coming from the community of peacebuilders. Power, in this case, would come from more research and better promotion of insights backed by international cooperation and solidarity.

[34] Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development, p.2. Available at http://www.genevadeclaration.org/pdfs/Geneva_Declaration_English.pdf

[35] Friedman, Milton, Capitalism and Freedom, 1962, repr. University of Chicago Press 1982, quoted in Klein, Naomi, The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism, Penguin/Allen Lane 2007

[36] Gladwell, Malcolm. The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference, Abacus 2002

# Conclusion

This paper argues for a deep change – it requires that those concerned about peacebuilding stop (yes, stop) and think together about how what they do contributes to the world they want to see. What are the deepest and most essential changes they are working towards, and how do the concrete actions and programmes they undertake contribute to these?

Such a process will need to be creative in itself, and require people involved to think outside the box. It will lead to a more outgoing approach – meeting people where they are, and avoiding moralising or trying to convert people to particular way of thinking. It will involve working both at governmental levels, to resist or develop policy, and within society, to create alternatives and build movements.

It should raise questions about the effectiveness and cost of current militarised models – in their own terms as well as those of peacebuilding. It should avoid making claims which cannot be substantiated and admit to areas where more practice and experimentation is needed. It should be evidence-based, and justifiable on that basis. It should also avoid being stripped of values and challenge, and thus reduced to technical solutions.

The peacebuilding community, and those who see themselves part of it, cannot, in our view, shirk the challenge. In turning away from its core transformative values and rejecting a wholehearted engagement with power and politics, it has found the resources necessary to develop institutionally, and gained a measure of official acceptance, but, perhaps, lost much of the raison d'être which brought it into existence. If the future of peacebuilding is to provide technical expertise to help powerful states and corporations assert their dominance over the global system more amicably and cheaply, in the short-term it is an easier choice to make. But in the long run it will not stand up to scrutiny, as the resources of the world become ever more contested, and rapid deterioration of the environment alters hopes and assumptions about a sustainable future for all.

*What next?*
Much of what has been said here is incomplete, contentious or both. Some readers may recognise in these pages issues with which they have been struggling, others may prefer to reject its core suggestions, or look the other way and continue with business as usual. Or they might join the conversation. Is anyone out there?