

January 2018

In & Around the UN

An Update from the Quaker United Nations Office

Quaker peacebuilding work in action – reflections from Burundi

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By Megan Schmidt, Quaker UN Representative

For decades, Friends have been leading the way to support peace and reconciliation in Burundi through peacebuilding efforts led across the country. This work has shown the tremendous dedication and partnership of Quakers both within the country and globally to put the peace testimony into action. At the end of last year, I found myself fortunate enough to learn firsthand about the breadth of this inspiring work upon my visit to Bujumbura, Burundi.

About the size of the state of Maryland with a population of roughly 10.5 million people, Burundi has experienced civil war, political conflict, and tremendous socio-economic hardships that have impacted the lives

of civilians throughout the country. Largely starting in response to community needs in the midst of war in the 1990s, Quaker service work by various actors and organizations has been a key part of the history of peacebuilding in Burundi. This work strives to address the widespread wounds experienced by conflict and instability, and to support the building blocks needed for long-term peace.

This peacebuilding work includes supporting reconciliation to build bridges across communities and strengthen social cohesion, implementing trauma-healing workshops to provide avenues for individuals and groups to start developing the tools needed to address suffering experienced in war and political

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Peacebuilding organizations face future challenges



Colleagues gather for “What’s next in peacebuilding” at Quaker House.

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The environment for peacebuilding organizations is becoming increasingly complex. Violent conflicts around the world are becoming more internationalized, with a proliferation of actors. For example, the recent UN World Bank report “Pathways for Peace” noted that, in 1950, there were an average of eight armed groups in a civil war; in 2014, there were more than 1,000 active armed groups involved in Syria alone. Similarly, in the past, peacebuilding policy discussions focused primarily on post-conflict developing countries, while now there is a critical need for peacebuilding perspectives across the spectrum from humanitarian and development initiatives to

peace and security conversations, including terrorism and violent extremism. Humanitarian need is now largely driven by violent conflict.

QUNO, too, has been doing its part. Our annual “What’s next in peacebuilding?” gatherings at Quaker House have brought together a small group of peacebuilding leaders to reflect on emerging trends and concerns in the field, and has resulted in a number of ad hoc coalitions to work on particular policy issues, such as exploring a peacebuilding lens on humanitarian action.

Yet peacebuilding organizations are small in number and modestly sized. The largest international peacebuilding organizations rarely

have revenues of more than \$25 million for their global work, and initiatives carried out by organizations at the local level are often on the smallest of budgets, some only amounting to \$1,000 annually. While tremendous strides have been made in understanding the drivers of violent conflict, and a solid evidence base has been assembled to demonstrate the effectiveness of peacebuilding tools, peacebuilding organizations are challenged in getting their messages across to decision makers and funders, and to the public at large. Accordingly, there has been a

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Letter from the Director

Dear Friends:

The United Nations has an enormous task – to “save succeeding generations from the scourge of war” – acting as the focal point for the life-saving work of the international community on development, humanitarian action, peace and security, climate change, and human rights. Yet it does so on a shoe-string budget: the world’s governments spend as much/ every 10 days just on their militaries as they spend on the UN in a year.

With such meager resources set against an impossibly broad mandate, it is important that the UN operates in as efficient a way as possible. This is a challenge, particularly as the work of the UN is done through a

multiplicity of departments, agencies, funds, and programs, and the Secretary-General has relatively little power.

Accordingly, António Guterres, the new Secretary-General, has embarked on an ambitious reform agenda, addressing development, peace and security, and management issues, aiming to correct the fragmentation of the UN system and ensure more coordinated efforts in the field. At the heart of this new reform agenda is a focus on prevention, a critical shift in thinking: one dollar spent on prevention saves sixteen in future costs.

In parallel with these organizational reform efforts, there is ongoing follow-up to the new frameworks for peace established in the 70th session

of the General Assembly, including the Sustaining Peace resolutions and the commitments to fostering peaceful, just, and inclusive societies in the 2030 Agenda. QUNO is deeply engaged with these processes, working directly with UN decision makers, as well as through the civil society groups that we convene. As the UN reconfigures itself to foster peace more effectively, we seek to ensure that it does so in a way that is responsive to the needs of those most affected by violence, injustice and exclusion around the world.

Thank you for your support.



Andrew Tomlinson

An update from our Geneva office

Ahead of international climate change negotiations taking place at the Conference of the Parties (COP 23) in Bonn, Germany, we published *A Negotiator’s Toolkit*. This “toolkit” provides a series of concise arguments for urgent climate action. Although intended as a resource for climate negotiators to engage busy Ministries, it is available to anyone seeking clear perspectives on why climate action is needed now.

This fall, we co-hosted a side event “Contributing to sustaining peace and conflict prevention: perspectives from agriculture, food security and nutrition” at the World Committee on Food Security. Nora Meier, our former programme assistant and now a consultant for the Food and Agriculture Organization, presented research on the potential

of informal seed systems for sustaining peace. The standing-room-only attendance of over 70 indicated broad interest in the nexus between peace, food security and nutrition.

Nora shared her findings again at an event hosted by QUNO during Geneva Peace Week.

As work toward a new multilateral

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QUNO hosts a panel discussion on the human rights of irregular migrants.

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QUNO on the role of civil society in conflict prevention



QUNO's UN-Representative (center front) delivers a statement on behalf of the Civil Society-UN Prevention Platform © QUNO

It's been an exciting time for QUNO, with the Quaker UN Representative for the Prevention of Violent Conflict, Rachel Madenyika, making a statement in the Economic and Social Council chamber on behalf of the Civil Society-UN Preven-

tion Platform (the Platform). The event, which highlighted the Joint UNDP-DPA Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention. The event was well attended by the member States, UN actors, and Civil Society actors. QUNO

was the only civil society organization formally asked to speak at this event. The Joint Programme works to develop and implement conflict prevention initiatives in 45 different countries.

In her statement, Rachel highlighted that the Platform, launched in 2016, aims to support the UN's prevention agenda through strengthening coordination and information sharing between civil society organizations and the UN at all levels. "We see enormous potential in growing and developing this relationship between civil society and the Joint Programme in NY and the field."

In her concluding remarks, Rachel stated that the Platform, co-facilitated by QUNO and the Global Partnerships for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), in close collaboration with the UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA), stood ready to nurture and grow this partnership between civil society and the UN. ♦

Burundi

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conflict, and providing avenues for business and economic development for young people in need of skills training and employment. It was truly inspiring to see Quaker values in practice, and to directly learn about the lived experiences of peacebuilding practitioners working throughout the country. Representing Friends at the UN, it is an honor and privilege for us at QUNO to be able to see the diverse initiatives Quakers, such as those in Burundi, are carrying out to promote peace and prevent conflict. ♦

Geneva

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agreement on migration continues, QUNO's focus remains on the human rights of migrants. Recently, we hosted a panel discussion on the rights that irregular migrants have to essential services such as healthcare, education and housing. The panelists presented examples of initiatives that have helped irregular migrants fulfill this right in practical, meaningful ways, and highlighted how the forthcoming UN Global Compact on Migration can be drafted to facilitate greater access to essential services for migrants regardless of their status. ♦



Staff comings and goings



PA Grace Ishimwe, Office Coordinator Elisabeth Halliday-Quan, PAs Evie McCullough, Anna Mijnlief, and Hafsa Maalim
© Hafsa Maalim

We've recently welcomed two new PAs and a new Fellow, and said good-bye to last year's PAs, Hafsa and Anna.

Program Assistant Evie McCullough joins us after recently completing her undergraduate degree in History and Political Science at Trinity College Dublin. After having spent a year abroad studying in Strasbourg, France, Evie finished her degree with a major in History. As part of this major, she completed a dissertation that focused on the relationships between history, memory, and conflict in Ireland, with reference to the Northern Irish Troubles. Brought up a Quaker, Evie is excited to be working within a Quaker organization, and to gain a deeper understanding of how peacebuilding and prevention are

implemented at the United Nations in New York. Evie will be assisting on QUNO's Prevention of Violent Conflict Program.

Grace Ishimwe joins us as a PA after recently completing her undergraduate degree in International Affairs at The George Washington University (GW), where she concentrated in Conflict Resolution, International Development, and Global Public Health. During her time at GW, her studies were focused on conflict resolution and development within the Great Lakes Region of Africa. Since 2009, Grace has spent time working with resettlement agencies in Louisville, Kentucky, and Washington, D.C., helping refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, Kenya, Ethiopia,

and Tanzania. Grace is excited to work with a Quaker organization to better understand the benefits and challenges that accompany how peacebuilding and prevention impact the work that is accomplished at the United Nations in New York. Grace will be assisting QUNO's work in the Peacebuilding Program.

Our Fellow, Kimberly Ai-Lin Loh, specializes in peacebuilding and conflict transformation, as a graduate of Columbia University's Master's program in Negotiation and Conflict Resolution. She traveled to Uganda as a research fellow, exploring mediation and narrative story-telling, and in her recent role as peace researcher for the Joan B. Kroc Institute of Peace and Justice in San Diego, California, she

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Peacebuilding

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growing focus on exploring different approaches to increasing impact through better coordination and effective action. For example, the Alliance for Peacebuilding, a network of over 100 peacebuilding organizations and an important QUNO partner, has been increasingly engaged in making the case for peacebuilding approaches to decision makers in Washington, D.C.

QUNO, too, has been doing its part. Our annual “What’s next in peacebuilding?” gatherings at Quaker House have brought together a small group of peacebuilding leaders to reflect on emerging trends and concerns in the field, and has resulted in a number of ad hoc coalitions to work on particular

policy issues, such as exploring a peacebuilding lens on humanitarian action.

Recently, for the third year running, QUNO led a process to put together a statement by global peacebuilding organizations on the occasion of the International Day of Peace. The statement, signed by 134 peacebuilding organizations from around the world, was delivered to all 193 UN member state delegations ahead of the opening days of the UN General Assembly, and called for a renewed effort in implementing the new international frameworks for peace in the 2030 Agenda and the Sustaining Peace resolutions.

The peacebuilding field may be small, but by working together we can have an outsized impact. ❖

Staff

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focused on gender, security, and the challenges for women-led peacebuilding. Since moving to New York in 2015, Kim has supported the work of United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Nonviolent Peaceforce, and Mediators Beyond Borders. Growing up between South-east Asia and the UK, she is a UK-qualified lawyer, mediator, and holds degrees in law and philosophy from College of Law London and University of Sussex. Kim is excited to work with QUNO and support their peace-

building policy development efforts.

Hafsa Maalim, our outgoing Program Assistant who worked on prevention while at QUNO, is now based in Nairobi working as a researcher for the Research and Evidence Facility Horn of Africa (REF). At the REF, Hafsa’s research focuses on issues around cross-border migration and internationally displaced peoples. Anna Mijnlief, our outgoing Program Assistant who worked on QUNO’s Peacebuilding Program, spent some time after finishing at QUNO travelling around Guatemala, and working on her Spanish. ❖

How to Support QUNO

QUNO welcomes donations to help cover the cost of its work. We are happy to accept contributions towards two areas of our work:

The Fund for Quaker House: the endowment supports the maintenance and operation of Quaker House.

QUNO Operating and Program Expenses: contributions can be made toward the cost of our annual budget.

Please make your check payable to “QUNO.” If you’d like your gift to go towards Quaker House, please write “Quaker House” in the memo portion of the check.

For credit card gifts, call toll free 1-888-588-2372 ext.1 , or click the [“Donations” button](#) on our web site and follow the instructions provided.

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