

RIPPLES INTO WAVES

**LOCALLY LED PEACEBUILDING
ON A NATIONAL SCALE**



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- *Insight on Conflict* (www.insightonconflict.org), Peace Direct's online information resource on local peacebuilders worldwide.
- *The UN Peacebuilding Portal* (www.peacebuildingportal.org).

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Cover image: Throne of Weapons, by Kester, created from weapons collected by FOMICRES in Mozambique (see page 3). © British Museum/Kester.



SUMMARY

This short paper aims to demonstrate that peacebuilding initiatives can be led by local rather than international players and that this approach can work successfully on a large scale. It aims to counter the view that locally-led activities cannot be scaled up sufficiently to make a significant impact. And it argues that ‘insiders’ (ie local players) are at least as important as ‘outsiders’ (ie international players) in building peace that is sustainable.

The paper summarises four peacebuilding initiatives, all more or less locally led, which have operated on a large scale, and which have had real impact in ending violent conflict.

It then sets out steps that could be taken to move from current practice, in which local capacity for peacebuilding is viewed as marginal, to one where it is regarded as a central element of any strategy for managing conflict.

BACKGROUND

Every society contains its own mechanisms for resolving conflict. If it did not, it would not hold together as a society. However, in situations of violent conflict, either in the run-up to conflict, during conflict, or in post-conflict settings, these mechanisms may not be sufficient. Outsiders – international mediators, UN agencies, international NGOs – may have an important role to play as well.

All too often, however, when outsiders become engaged, they pay little attention to the local capacity for conflict resolution that is already active. Instead of knitting efforts together for the greatest impact, outsiders ‘land’ and take over, dominating media coverage of the conflict, and controlling the narrative of what really counts in making peace.

A more balanced approach is expressed by Sara Pantuliano, of the Overseas Development Institute: ‘You can imagine the externally brokered peace agreement as being like the stones in a wall. But the work of local, insider peacebuilding constitutes the cement that holds those stones in place. Without cement, the wall will fall down.’¹ And

1 Author’s conversation with Sara Pantuliano.

that is one reason among several why 40% of peace agreements fail, leading to a resumption of conflict within 10 years.²

One reason that outsiders rarely investigate local capacities for peacebuilding, before planning their own interventions, is their perception that local initiatives are small-scale: worthy and well intentioned, it is assumed, but insufficient to make a difference to the conflict writ large. The case studies that follow show a different picture of local peacebuilding.

CASE STUDIES

Case study A: Somaliland

This is an example of local peacebuilding on a national scale, with high impact and low cost.

The series of peace agreements in the 1990s, whereby violent conflict was ended in the northern part of Somalia, is widely recognised as one of the most successful peace initiatives in the Horn of Africa – often rather ruefully, as it was done with little assistance from outside. There were a number of reasons for this absence of outside help. First, there was no international support for a breakaway Somaliland. Second, the Somalis involved had a clear conception of their priorities post-conflict, which included reviving the traditional justice system. Outsiders had little to offer towards these goals.

The process that led to the Borama conference in 1993 was largely bottom-up, as small-scale peace negotiations led by the local elders joined together in a circular or repetitive pattern, until the whole area of Somaliland was included. It has been said that this iterative approach, and the fact that sub-clans were given the responsibility for disarming their own members, overcame one of the main issues in disarmament and demobilisation programmes, namely the vulnerability of the first group to disarm. Outsiders, for example the Mennonites, provided small amounts of funding for ‘petrol and rice’ – the costs of bringing people together – though most of the costs were born by local and diaspora businesses.

2 ‘Greed and grievance in civil war’, Paul Collier with Anke Hoeffler, *Oxford Economic Papers*, vol 56 issue 4, 2004.

However, the peace was not durable, and a second round of peace conferences in the mid-1990s led to a lasting peace and the current constitutional structure of a house of elected party representatives and an upper house of nominated clan elders. This arrangement ensured a widely representative parliament. In all, it is estimated that over 100 peace conferences at different levels were held – a large-scale activity across the whole of society. The overall non-Somali external contribution to the two series of peace conferences is estimated at around \$500,000³ – a tiny sum compared to the costs of the successive peace conferences held in Djibouti and elsewhere for Somalia.

In this case, there seem to have been positive reasons why the peace agreement succeeded effectively without international assistance:⁴

- Lack of financial support to the government from outside increased the influence of the business community. Because the pastoral economy was dependent on stability and management of public goods, the business community supported political reconciliation.
- Lack of outside support for the government meant that the latter needed to build broad coalitions to be sustainable.
- The absence of external foreign assistance helped to allay concerns among the population about the possible emergence of a predatory state that would be unaccountable to its population.

Case study B: Mozambique

This is an example of locally-led disarmament that was both cheaper and larger-scale than the UN-led process that preceded it.

Many indigenous Mozambican organisations have played a part in safeguarding the peace after the peace agreements.⁵ One of the largest-scale initiatives was FOMICRES' campaign to collect weapons left over from the war, eventually totalling over 800,000 weapons (described as the Arms to Ploughshares programme).

FOMICRES (Mozambican Force for Crime Investigation and

³ Author's conversation with John Paul Lederach, Notre Dame University.

⁴ 'Peacebuilding without External Assistance: Lessons from Somaliland', Nicholas Eubank, Centre for Global Development, 2010.

⁵ See, for example, Collaborative for Development Action case study 'The Cumulative Impact of Peacebuilding in Mozambique', 2009.

Social Reinsertion) was founded as an informal organisation by a group of Mozambicans most of whom had served as child soldiers, in some cases for both Frelimo and Renamo. The context was that the UN (UNAMAZ) had spent two years disarming combatants, but there were still very large caches of weapons scattered across the country. FOMICRES' approach was to visit communities where they suspected there were weapons, and engage in discussion with the community about whether the presence of weapons really made them feel safer. If the community agreed that they wanted to be rid of the weapons, FOMICRES offered the 'service' of taking and destroying the weapons, in full view. Economic incentives were provided to the community as a whole according to a tariff – small dumps might win a bicycle, building materials or a sewing machine. A large collection of 700 weapons could secure a tractor.

FOMICRES displayed great ingenuity in resourcing the programme. As well as receiving approximately \$6m in cash grants from international donors over a 10-year period, they secured containers of abandoned bicycles from Japan.

FOMICRES, unique among NGOs to be formally authorised to collect and destroy weapons after the war, engaged and managed the whole process from beginning to end, including the physical destruction of the weapons, for which they received training from the South African police. The civic education on reconciliation was done in partnership with church members of the Christian Council of Mozambique. Most of the weapons were blown up or cut up, and some of the latter were made into artworks such as the celebrated Throne of Weapons (see front cover), which have been displayed all over the world including in the UN. It is unlikely that they would have been able to take on the role of collecting and destroying weapons if UNAMAZ had not left Mozambique after only two years, in 1996.

This example illustrates the very significant difference in cost between international and local approaches. The UNAMAZ mission spent \$113m in demobilising, reinserting and reintegrating 92,881 former combatants.⁶ The money cost of FOMICRES' 10-year programme to deal with over 800,000 weapons was only \$6m.

⁶ *I am grateful to Cornelis (Kees) Steenken, Co-ordinator, UN Inter-Agency Working Group on DDR, for this information.*

Case study C: Kenya

This is an example of conflict resolution that could only have been provided by local players, and operated on three sophisticated levels nationwide.

Even before the results of the 2007 Kenyan elections were announced, people in Kenya could see trouble ahead. George Wachira, in his case study 'Kenya's Concerned Citizens for Peace',⁷ described how this initiative took shape even before the election results, as members of the five-person Concerned Citizens for Peace Committee (CCP) noticed an upsurge in violence. The Committee, composed of two former generals, a former ambassador and two well-known peace activists, was in full operation at the Serena Hotel in Nairobi by 1 January 2008, just two days after the controversial swearing-in of President Kibaki.

Dekha Ibrahim Abdi, Convenor of CCP, has written of how CCP worked simultaneously at three levels – downstream, midstream and upstream.⁸

Level 1: Downstream

At the heart of CCP was the Open Forum, initially held daily, then thrice weekly and then weekly. This provided an opportunity for anyone to come with ideas about how to arrest the violence, appeal for help and resources, or offer them. People came from all sectors of society – business, media, political analysts, university chancellors, young people, student leaders, government officials, religious leaders and politicians. As well as becoming a hub for action, it also became 'a crucial meeting point where Kenyans could come together, reflect and analyse the conflict'.

From this analysis came the Citizens' Agenda for Peace, launched on 9 January 2008, which was widely circulated locally and on the internet, as well as being shared with the diplomats and eminent persons who became involved in helping to resolve the crisis. This document, launched less than two weeks after the crisis broke, was

7 'Kenya's Concerned Citizens for Peace – A Model Citizen's Response to National Political-Ethnic Conflict in Kenya's 2008 Post-Election Violence', George Wachira with Thomas Arendshorst and Simon Charles, *NPI-Africa*, 2010.

8 'Insider Mediators', Dekha Ibrahim Abdi, *Swisspeace CSS/Berghof Foundation for Peace Support*, 2008.

substantially mirrored in the later four-point plan of Kofi Annan's negotiating team.

Many initiatives were launched through the Open Forum. The Open Forum looked not only at the hot spots where violence was already a problem, but also at the 'cold spots' where people could see the prospect of violence in the future. Two examples among many: mediation was provided to women's groups around the Rift Valley; and the Decent Burials and Mourning Initiative, funded by American Friends Service Committee, was launched. The Open Forum also led to many sub-groups such as the Concerned Youth for Peace and the Veterans for Peace.

Level 2: Midstream

The midstream work involved influencing institutions that had the capacity to improve the peace process. These included:

- The Ministry of Education, with whose agreement 400 heads of schools were given training in how to handle trauma and conflict when the schools reopened.
- The Ministry of Internal Security and Reform, which led to a direct link between the Permanent Secretary's office and CCP.
- The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Dialogue and student leaders from public universities, to discuss how the latter could play a role in both the national dialogue and in the provision of security at their universities.
- The Nairobi Provincial Government, to avert full-scale violence in Nairobi, including through the formation of the Nairobi Peace Forum.
- The media, including cellphone companies, to persuade them to give space to messages promoting non-violence. So, for example, all four major daily newspapers agreed to publish the same one-page advertisement from CCP, and one of the cellphone companies arranged that whenever a subscriber topped up their credit they would get a message arguing against resorting to violence. They also worked with the native language FM radio stations, which had been fuelling the pre-election violence, to secure a commitment from them to play an active role in securing the peace.

Level 3: Upstream

In order to support the top-level mediation process, the CCP formed a 12-member Technical and Strategy Team to convey the messages and suggestions from the Open Forum to the external mediators.

As with all cases of conflict prevention, it is impossible to know for sure how differently things would have turned out without the intervention of CCP, and how much of a role they played in ensuring that in the end there was a peaceful solution. What is not in dispute, however, is that their reach into the populations that were becoming perpetrators of violence was far greater and far faster than any external agency. This was much helped by platforms such as Ushahidi (www.ushahidi.com), which enabled thousands of ordinary people to share minute-by-minute information about the unfolding situation. (Ushahidi has since been used in a number of humanitarian and conflict situations, including in Gaza.)

In addition, their ability to demonstrate that there was widespread agitation for a peaceful solution put moral pressure on the two political leaders, which could not have been replicated by outsiders.

Case study D: Guyana

The Guyanan case differs from the first three, in that it represents a deliberate effort by outside organisations, particularly UNDP and USAID, to mobilise local capacity for peacebuilding.⁹

The context was a series of elections marked by violence, and growing tension in 2002-3 between the two main ethnic groups. Initially the approach chosen by the outside agencies was to broker high-level discussions between the political parties. However, after 18 months little had been achieved. As criminal violence mounted, a women's organisation, WAVE, had begun large-scale demonstrations every Friday, while Rights of the Child, a youth organisation, established 'Race-Free Zones'.

Concerned about the diminishing likelihood of violence-free elections in 2006, and building on the momentum of these civil-society actions and work that had already been initiated by Guyanese

⁹ *This case is discussed in detail in 'Towards Ethnic Conflict Transformation? A Case Study of the Cumulative Impact of Citizen Peacebuilding Initiatives on the 2006 Guyana Elections', Roxanne Myers, Future Generations, 2009.*

organisations from universities to trades unions, the government and international donors launched several large-scale programmes aimed at building conflict resolution skills and promoting co-existence.

The principal initiatives were the Ethnic Relations Commission (a constitutional body), the multi-donor supported United Nations Social Cohesion Programme (SCP), and the USAID-funded Guyana Democratic Consolidation and Conflict Resolution Project.

These two latter programmes engaged the population on a very large scale. It is estimated that approximately 30% of the population were involved in one or more activities of the SCP alone. As well as working to improve conflict resolution skills of official institutions such as local government and the police, a concerted effort was made to find ordinary citizens with an interest in developing these skills. This extended to contracting with local NGOs to work with 'hard to reach' young people in some of the most disadvantaged communities.

The three-year programme stimulated a large number of different citizen-led initiatives, including with the media, as well as more formal activities involving conflict-sensitive development in particularly disadvantaged regions.

When the 2006 elections came round, people in large numbers were talking about social cohesion and dealing with conflict non-violently, even if those words were less familiar than the vernacular 'All awe are one' ('All of us are one people'). The elections were the first in living memory to be held without violence.

DISCUSSION

These four situations are ones in which either outsiders were never involved (Somaliland), stayed for only a short time (Mozambique), arrived after the local initiative had started (Kenya), or made a conscious effort to find and mobilise local capacity (Guyana). They thus illustrate a variety of relationships between outsiders and insiders.

It would be a high-risk strategy to conclude that outsiders should simply absent themselves, stand back and wait for locally-led peacebuilding to succeed. While in some cases this could happen, there are also cases of neglected conflicts where local capacity has been insufficient to bring conflict to an end (eg Burundi in 1993).

Rather, what is needed is a new orthodoxy that places local capacity (going far beyond the government) at the centre, gives it a leadership role, and respects its expertise and commitment. This requires profound changes in the way that outsiders plan interventions.

Fortunately, many of those involved can already see the need, and are looking for the way forward. And the importance of involving local capacity in peacebuilding is already embedded in several key documents – for example the UN Inter-Agency Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards.¹⁰

However, practice on the ground often fails to meet these aspirations. In order to move forward, we need to make equitable comparisons between international and local capacity. Both have strengths and limitations. But where local organisations have the capacity to do a job – for example reintegration of combatants or IDPs, weapons collection, civilian protection – then there are reasons to favour giving them a lead role:

- Organisational sustainability – peacebuilding is a long-term project, and local organisations are more likely to stay the 15-20-year course.
- Continuity of personnel – the individuals involved are more likely to stay involved for the long term if they are local.
- Cost-effectiveness – some of the statistics quoted above suggest that local capacity is at least one, and in some cases two, orders of magnitude cheaper than using outsiders.

Some of the constraints on using a ‘local first’ approach are: a) the commitments that may have been given as part of a peace agreement (for example, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in Sudan gave the two Governments a monopoly on promulgating the CPA); or b) the limitations that the UN faces in making use of civil-society capacity because it is a body of nation states. This is a particular issue for the Peacebuilding Commission, whose mandate is limited to supporting governments. However, the first suggestion below is one that even the Peacebuilding Commission should be able to support.

¹⁰ *Briefing Note for Senior Managers on the Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards* (eg Section V, *Has there been an assessment of national capacities for DDR?*).

A FOUR-STEP APPROACH

There will be many suggestions from people much closer to the field and with long experience, about how ‘local first and local large-scale’ could be turned into an operational policy. This paper is intended to provoke such suggestions. To start the ball rolling, here is a simple four-step approach that could be adopted in virtually every conflict-affected region or country.

Step 1: Use locally led continuous conflict analysis

Lisa Schirch, of Eastern Mennonite University, has proposed that donors take a new approach to conflict analysis. Rather than each donor fly in a team to conduct a snapshot analysis, why not recruit a team of local informants drawn from different sections of society, to maintain a continuous conflict analysis and monitoring system which could be shared by all donors? This would respect local knowledge, save money and build local capacity, as well as helping donors to align their responses to the conflict with each other. Experts from outside the conflict area could provide support, without taking over the direction.

Research by the Collaborative for Development Action suggests that a shared analysis can be important in creating momentum for peace: *‘Several cases point to the importance of the emergence of a shared analysis (even if not agreed to or common) as a benchmark for progress and a contributor to momentum for peace.... This did not mean that people agreed on the analysis of the conflict, but that they had developed an analysis acknowledging the concerns of others as legitimate. In Northern Ireland, the development of this shared analysis appeared to be the most significant impact of the multitude of unconnected and unco-ordinated peace activities that seemed to ‘add up’.*¹¹

In this context, continuous local analysis systems could unite smaller civil-society elements into a national-scale network, pooling deep knowledge and promoting a ‘joined-up’ approach.

¹¹ *‘Reflecting on Peace Practice: Consultation Report: Understanding Cumulative Impact’, CDA, 2008.*

Step 2: Build the conflict analysis into an active platform for peacebuilding

The local monitoring system could develop into the kind of platform for peacebuilding that Concerned Citizens for Peace created in Kenya (and to a smaller degree, Peace Direct has created in the Collaborative for Peace in Sudan). Such platforms are inclusive to everyone who wants to make a contribution. They invite people to contribute without reward, and thus attract people who are motivated by civic responsibility and a desire for a lasting peace. Outside resources may be needed for basic costs, such as ‘petrol and rice’ in the case of Somaliland, but if a large-scale ‘momentum for peace’ is to be created then paid staff will need to mobilise large numbers of volunteers.

This kind of large-scale voluntary effort was a feature of all four of our case studies, enabling them to reach much further into the population than they could have done with paid staff alone.

Step 3: Allocate dedicated funding to the platform

If the locally led platform is to be fully effective, and able to work with international organisations on a basis of mutual respect and independence, then it needs to have funding allocated specifically to it. As programmes can often be carried out for around 10% of the cost if led locally, an appropriate allocation might be 10% of the funds allocated to the UN for peacebuilding and statebuilding purposes in that country. The platform would have to demonstrate to donors that it had transparent and effective mechanisms for deciding its priorities and choosing the most effective organisations to carry them out, as well as for monitoring their impact. In this regard, there might be a role for outside support at the outset, but with a clear intention that the local platform should function independently in say three years.

Step 4: Take a long view

The problem of the mismatch between aid flows and needs in post-conflict societies has been well documented.¹² Funding plans need

¹² ‘A New Approach to Post-War Reconstruction’, Fredrik Galtung and Malcolm Tisne, *Journal of Democracy*, vol 20 no 4, October 2009.

to conserve funding at the beginning, when local capacity to absorb it may be limited, in order to be able to continue to fund for the long term. As John Paul Lederach has pointed out, if it took Northern Ireland 12 years after the Good Friday peace agreement to resolve the issue of how Northern Ireland is to be policed, how can we expect much more unstable countries such as DRC to achieve stability in less than 15-20 years?

Again, local peacebuilders are well suited for the longer haul, since they are personally committed to their own communities. They are also highly cost-effective, making the long haul more sustainable.

CONCLUSION

This is a contribution to the debate on a new approach to peacebuilding that is sustainable, cost-effective and self-determining. We invite interested parties to share their ideas and experiences with us. Our contact details are opposite.

ABOUT PEACE DIRECT

Peace Direct is a UK charity that finds and funds peace-building initiatives led by local people in conflict zones worldwide, and promotes these to people in power and to the public at large.

Many of the organisations that we support are building formal or informal platforms of the kind described in this paper. For example, we helped to establish the Collaborative for Peace in Sudan, a movement of peace organisations crossing Sudan's North-South divide. The Collaborative has launched actions with a large number of Sudanese organisations, including:

- *Dissemination of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.*
- *Supporting tribal leaders to resolve longstanding conflicts.*
- *Bringing oil companies, MPs and community leaders together to launch the Sudan Oil and Human Security Initiative.*
- *Building a network of peace committees in South Kordofan and Blue Nile, to map conflict and intervene in potential hot spots.*
- *Training people in Blue Nile, South Kordofan and Jonglei States in preventing election-related violence.*
- *Training community activists to conduct environmental and social impact assessments in oil-affected areas.*

Our work can be seen at www.peacedirect.org, or you can contact us at Peace Direct, Development House, 56-64 Leonard Street, London EC2A 4LT, UK (tel +44 (0)20 7549 0285, email carolyn@peacedirect.org).

ABOUT THE QUAKER UNITED NATIONS OFFICE

The Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) is located in two settings – New York and Geneva. Included in the broad range of work undertaken by QUNO in New York and Geneva is a particular emphasis on the prevention of violent conflict and on peacebuilding.

Much of Quaker work in conflict settings in many parts of the world is of the locally-led variety highlighted in this paper. We are pleased to co-sponsor the publication of this report, as it speaks clearly to one of our core purposes, that of enabling local voices to be heard at international policy levels. For information on our peacebuilding work, see www.quno.org or contact us:

- *Quaker United Nations Office, 777 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY, USA 10017 (tel +1 212 682 2745, email qunony@afsc.org).*
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– Sara Pantuliano, Overseas Development Institute, London

