# Peacebuilding in Afghanistan and Perspectives on Civil Society's Role in the Peace Processes in Northern Ireland and the Balkans:

A Report of Workshop Proceedings

The views and opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily correspond to the views of BAAG, its members, or other NGOs, Afghan or international.

# Contents

# Executive Summary

*This workshop on peacebuilding took place in Dublin, the Republic of Ireland, from 23-27 February 2012. It was organised by the British and Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group in association with Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation. It was attended by a group of 17 peacebuilders and civil society activists from Afghanistan and a number of peace practitioners, politicians and civil society representatives from other conflict areas.*

*The aim of the workshop was to discuss peacebuilding and facilitate an exchange of ideas about civil society's role in peace processes. The workshop sessions were organised to explore a range of perspectives on the peace processes in Northern Ireland and the Balkans. After each session, participants were given time to reflect and debate whether the issues and experiences presented had resonance for peacebuilding in Afghanistan.*

*This report highlights some of the recurring themes, insights, observations and proposals for action that were raised and discussed in depth over the course of this five day workshop.*

## Is it peace yet?

The workshop began with a presentation by Sue Williams, an experienced policy specialist, trainer and researcher in conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and Fahim Hakim, Commissioner at the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission. In the introductory session, participants were given an opportunity to examine concepts of, and ideas about, peace.

Based on the supposition that peace is unlikely to meet everyone's immediate needs, participants were asked to consider what is, and what is not, peace. They explored how definitions of peace differ across and within societies. They also examined what is needed to build a peaceful society and who can do that.

Following these discussions, reflections on the Northern Irish Peace Process were shared with participants as a means of stimulating discussion of civil society's potential to drive political and structural change during peace negotiations. Ian White, Glencree's Director of International Programmes and Sean McGearty, Glencree's Programme Co-ordinator, mapped Northern Ireland's journey from seemingly intractable conflict to relative peace and stability. Sue Williams then presented the findings of a study that focused on local perceptions of the transition to peace in Northern Ireland[1]. It was noted that local politicians, paramilitary actors, civil society and government figures in Northern Ireland had attributed the change to the cumulative effect of scattered peace initiatives that had worked on five aspects of the

1. Fitzduff, N. Williams, S. (2007), How did Northern Ireland Move Towards Peace?, Reflecting on Peace Practice, CDA Collaborative Learning Project

situation:

- ▶ Political Options - Exploration of political settlement options through dialogue (gradually involving more and more of society in these discussions)
- ▶ Cross-community Work - Dialogue to promote mutual understanding
- ▶ Conflict resolution - Work to equip communities with the means to resolve disputes peacefully
- ▶ Injustice - Work to establish mechanisms to prevent or correct future injustices
- ▶ Diversity - Initiatives to promote and manage diversity and equality by enshrining principles and structures to guarantee this in the future

It was stressed that civil society had played an important role in addressing each of these, and in doing so, had contributed to the development of a climate in which new ideas could be explored and confidence in the possibility of peace expanded.

## What peace?

In the second session, Michael Semple, a regional specialist on Afghanistan and Pakistan, shared his perspectives on the Taliban and likely insurgent strategies post-2014. He suggested that while pragmatists within the Taliban hold a stronger voice than previously, they are still struggling to gain traction. Attention was drawn to some of the parallels between the situations in Afghanistan and Northern Ireland. These included:

- ▶ The fact that the release of prisoners is a core issue for negotiations
- ▶ The prerequisite that the political leadership of parties affiliated with the conflict need to evolve to a point wherein they favour a transition from violent action to political action
- ▶ The need for the civilian population to engage with difficult questions about what peace and reconciliation mean at an individual and community level

Michael suggested that civil society can play a multifaceted role in the process. It can be pro-peace; it can convene Afghan stakeholders and support peace makers; it can work on conflict resolution – nationally and locally, and if it chooses, it can provide the means for back-channel diplomacy for those involved in conflict.

Three political and security scenarios for Afghanistan post-2014 were then presented for consideration. These were:
- ▶ Scenario A: Political continuity despite low-level Taliban insurgency
- ▶ Scenario B: Escalating violence amounting to civil war

▶ Scenario C: Peace settlement with an end to major violence

In the third session, participants analysed the opportunities and threats to peacebuilding within these three scenarios. The key opportunities identified within all three were:

▶ The increasing strength of civil society and its role in advocacy, peacebuilding and in public awareness raising, particularly as it relates to women's participation and women's rights
▶ A consensus among the general population that there is a need for peace and a peace process
▶ The existence of an enthusiastic, pro-peace youth
▶ A heightened political awareness and consciousness among some politicians and political parties.

However, participants argued that a number of factors will make it extremely challenging to harness these opportunities, particularly as they relate to the participation of women in peace processes. These included deteriorating security and increasing lawlessness. They criticised the fact that civic values often fall victim to political and military strategy. It was suggested that over the past decade the intellectual input and ideas of civil society have been consistently disregarded. It was felt that the international community had ignored important opportunities to invest in and provide support for civil society, despite its critical role as an enabler of peace and dialogue.

The major threats identified within all three scenarios included the lack of rule of law and the lack of transparency and inclusiveness of the current peace processes. It was felt that without these elements it would be difficult to engender trust in the process.

Participants strongly felt that the focus of current peace processes is too narrow. They believed that the possibility of peace should be widely discussed, and a general momentum towards peace built in the civilian population across the country. Participants also argued that at present a critical aspect of the process is missing - one that they felt had been integral to the peace processes in Northern Ireland. This was the incorporation of mechanisms and infrastructure to deliver the systemic change needed to prevent future injustices and grievances. Participants stressed the importance of such reforms not only in breaking the cycle of impunity that they feel has embedded itself in Afghanistan's socio-political life, but also in promoting a wider confidence in the possibility of peace.

## Political passage
In the fourth session, Padraig MacLochlainn, a Sinn Féin Parliamentarian, described his personal experience of the Northern Irish conflict and the imprisonment of his father and uncle, both members of the Provisional IRA (a Republican paramilitary organisation). He explained that, as part of a political party that had been linked to the violence, his three key lessons for negotiations were:

▶ There are no winners or losers in negotiations – parties to the conflict will not achieve in negotiations what they could not achieve by war and violence
▶ There are no simple solutions. There will be many setbacks, but it is important to stay on the path
▶ Actors in the conflict must engage their own people - those they represent

Padraig stressed that one of the biggest challenges facing those involved in any peace processes is to convince their own constituency of the need to accommodate the other and to make concessions for the benefit of all. He stated that Sinn Féin was very effective in working with its own membership and with IRA members involved in, or supportive of, the conflict, to convince them of the benefits of a peace strategy and in persuading them to follow a peaceful path.

During this session the critical role of civil society was emphasised. Pádraig suggested that it was civil society that had created and guarded an independent space in which new political options could be explored. Participants also explored the issue of trust in detail. Pádraig cited how Sinn Féin's leader, Gerry Adams, had stated at the beginning of the peace process that those involved in the conflict did not have to trust each other, but they had to trust the process. Participants pointed to the fact that trust in the process is currently absent in Afghanistan. Many of the participants questioned Padraig about his views on the issues of justice, reconciliation and amnesties. Pádraig replied that every peace process has to find its own answer to the question of how best to achieve a just and equitable future for all. He indicated that he believed that ideal justice cannot be achieved in peace processes, and this should be appreciated in the context of Afghanistan as well.

## What role for women?
In the fifth session, Professor Monica McWilliams, who represented the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition in the peace negotiations, described her journey from local activist to political activist. Her central message to the participants was that when a society has been normalised to unacceptable levels of violence, peace will take a long time to manage. Building on the discussions in Session 4, Monica reiterated that it is civil society that lays the foundations for peace by showing united leadership, courage, understanding and - most importantly - by talking about what is possible.

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Monica provided information on the women's movement in Ireland, stating that women's participation in politics and the peace process in Northern Ireland had been fraught with challenges. She noted that a number of community activists had made the leap from a civic society movement to a political party (in the form of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition) because they believed that the political leaders at the time were indifferent to the representation of women's issues and women's participation in peace negotiations. She suggested that the women had taken an holistic approach to peace and brought to the table substantive issues that would not otherwise have been addressed. These included women's rights, housing, healthcare, and the integration of communities. She felt that putting such items on the negotiation agenda had led to important initiatives for future peace, such as the adoption of the 'Education for Mutual Understanding' in the core school curriculum.

Monica stressed that it had been surprisingly easy to reach consensus on some complex aspects of the negotiation process; for example, police reform, the release of prisoners and power-sharing. She emphasised that dealing with the past had been the most difficult, but the most instrumental, part of the negotiation process. It was felt that the success of the negotiations was partly as a result of the fact that each aspect of the conflict (governance, policing, economic and social reconstruction, reconciliation) had been broken down, unpicked and addressed in depth and one step at a time. This, in turn, allowed confidence in the process to develop.

In follow-up discussions, participants discussed the differences in culture and context between Northern Ireland and Afghanistan. They felt that the lack of trust in the process and the external hand in Afghan affairs set the two contexts apart. It was also felt that civil society in Afghanistan is a burgeoning one and that different networks do not necessarily work to the same agenda. This, in turn, prompted substantial exploration of the definition of civil society. It was felt by some participants that the term is often defined too narrowly in the Afghan context and that more needs to be done to ensure the engagement of religious civil society in peacebuilding and the realisation of rights in Afghanistan. Some participants felt that civil society needs to be more strategic in harnessing momentum towards peace. It was emphasised that more needs to be done to build a united, well-organised movement for peace in Afghanistan that has the confidence to engage widely and prepare the ground for actors in the conflict to step out from behind entrenched identities.

## Analysis of peacebuilding

The sixth session, led by Sue Williams, aimed to introduce participants to a number of peacebuilding tools to help organisations assess peacebuilding efforts at a local, provincial and national level. Drawing on Northern Ireland as an example, the tools (see page 18) were used to demonstrate how a spread of initiatives aimed at different audiences can enhance preparatory analysis and strategic planning. Participants were shown how the tools can be used to create constructive linkage and mutual support between peace projects, enhancing their impact.

It was suggested that such tools can also help to build important understanding of which aspects of the conflict are not being addressed in any given context - local, provincial or national.

In the next session, led by Fahim Hakim, the tools were used as a stimulus to promote reflection and deeper exploration of the gaps in peacebuilding work in Afghanistan. Participants identified the priorities for immediate action as:

▶ Developing peacebuilding capacity generally
▶ Establishing peacebuilding groups in the provinces and encouraging networking between them
▶ Mobilising youth as advocates of change
▶ Empowering women and encouraging their active participation in peace processes
▶ Building trust at all levels
▶ Encouraging good governance
▶ Mobilising a body of civil society to act as a neutral, independent mediator
▶ Building external peacebuilding support networks regionally and internationally
▶ Developing peace education
▶ Reforming the High Peace Council and the Provincial Peace Committees so that they become active peace councils that communicate across provinces
▶ Creating jobs

It was felt community and provincial level work on these priorities is essential. Participants also proposed that current peacebuilding efforts should be expanded to incorporate more locations in order to envelop more people and key people. Suggestions included work with:

▶ Ulema
▶ Security forces
▶ The private sector
▶ The families of combatants
▶ Political parties
▶ Victims groups
▶ The media

Attention was drawn to the need to ensure legitimacy and authenticity of action. It was felt that organisations need to exercise caution and not attempt to become experts in everything. Instead, peacebuilding organisations should use the grid to help them build coalitions of organisations with the relevant expertise and experience to address gaps. Building the trust of communities was seen as a critical element in all work.

## Post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina: Post-war reconstruction

In the penultimate session, Ian Bancroft, Director of TransConflict, an organisation that undertakes post-conflict transformation projects and research throughout the Western Balkans, gave an historical overview of the conflict over Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). Ian described the defensive 'minority syndrome' that exists among Bosnian Serbs, Bosnian Croats and Bosniaks in BiH. He outlined how each group holds a competing version of 'self-determination' that embodies a different conception of national identity and state allegiance and then explored the challenge of how to resolve these competing claims.

It was emphasised that that Bosnia and Herzegovina is regarded as an "extremely weak and dysfunctional post-war state that would probably not have survived without substantial international support over the decade following the war."[2] It was emphasised that the quality of the peace attained can not be ignored – the absence of violence does not necessarily guarantee the existence of constructive relationships between individuals and communities.

Civil society's role in improving this quality of peace was examined. It was noted that civil society has been active in a number of core areas, including:

► Justice and human rights work
► Local governance
► Work to promote inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic understanding
► Political options campaigning

Attention was drawn to initiatives such as the REKOM coalition - a regional network of civil society organisations seeking the establishment of a region-wide body to uncover the crimes committed during the war in Bosnia-Herzegovia. Participants felt that initiatives such as these and NGO projects to record civilian casualties are important in preventing revisionism.

## Visions for the future

In the final session of the workshop, participants were asked to define the key elements that they would wish to see integrated into future peacebuilding in Afghanistan. They identified the following core values for the peace process:

► It should be based on the social and religious values of Afghanistan and build on an Islamic understanding of peace
► It should define a commitment to human rights and good governance
► It should recognize the need for a transparency of process that allows every community and segment of society to be involved without discrimination
► It should ensure absolute commitment to exclusively peaceful means of resolving differences
► It should acknowledge and develop mechanisms to ensure commitment to, and observation of, rule of law, women's rights and social justice

Participants concluded by suggesting that the following action is necessary for progression to be made towards the realisation of these principles:

► Civil society must fully accept its responsibility to take an active role in the peace process in Afghanistan and must encourage others to do likewise
► Civil society must work to strengthen existing relationships between stakeholders, invest in forging relations with new types of stakeholder, and commit to analysing and mending fault-lines that have developed in old relationships.

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2. Bose, S. (2002:60) 'Bosnia after Dayton: Nationalist Partition and International Intervention', Oxford University Press, New York

# Session 1

## What is Peace?  Questions for societies in conflict and organisations engaging in Peacebuilding.
*Facilitated by Sue Williams and Fahim Hakim*

The introductory session was used to explore the participants' concepts of, and ideas about, peace; Later, these thoughts and understandings were to be used to inform analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to peace and peacebuilding in Afghanistan and other conflict areas.  Participants were asked to reflect on the following questions:

### Is it peace yet?
Peace is unlikely to meet all of everyone's needs.  In this context:

- ► What is, and what is not, peace?
  Do definitions of peace differ across and within societies?
- ► Is Afghanistan on the path to peace, or back to war? What are the opportunities and challenges presented by both scenarios?  What are the risks in going forward, or going back?
- ► Is there an acknowledgement of the key problems and the need to address them?
  Is each individual's or group's starting analysis of what the problem is based on differing definitions of the problems and solutions[3]?  Is there any possibility of a shared analysis that comprehends the different viewpoints, and works together to create options?
- ► Can I (or we) hope that the issue most important to me (or to us as an organisation/group) will be addressed?
- ► Do I believe that society can change and that others will accept change? Everyone is influenced by the culture and experiences they have grown up with, so they are likely to 'know' one side of the story much better than another. In contested situations, 'knowing' is incomplete until it is tested and completed by the way others experience events.

### Building peace
- ► What is needed to build peace and a peaceful society? Who can do it?
- ► What is already happening and who is doing it? How can we make it more effective?
- ► Can we invent new ways of governing ourselves?

### Reflections on initiatives which brought about change in the conflict in Northern Ireland.
*Discussion led by Sue Williams*
Consideration of these questions highlighted the formidable challenges in trying to achieve peace in Afghanistan.  Participants were therefore given the opportunity to explore whether, in meeting these challenges, there might be any lessons that could be drawn from other conflict contexts. These lessons, while not directly transferable, might provide useful comparative examples, inspiration, or merely the courage and motivation to persevere in peacebuilding.

It was acknowledged that each conflict setting provides unique challenges at a local, national and regional level.  However, a brief history of the Northern Irish Peace Processes was offered as a means of stimulating discussion of civil society's involvement in driving political and structural change during peace negotiations.

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3. Fitzduff, N. Williams, S. (2007:25), How did Northern Ireland Move Towards Peace?, Reflecting on Peace Practice, CDA Collaborative Learning Project

## Background to the Irish Conflict and the Northern Irish Peace Process

*(Extracts from a presentation by Sean McGearty and Ian White at the workshop and a paper by John Darby (2003), 'Northern Ireland: The Background to the Peace Process').*

There are two main communities in Northern Ireland with separate cultural, ethnic and religious identities. Each of the two communities placed their emphases on different elements of the problem. The two communities are:

▶ Unionist/Loyalists, usually of Protestant religion and in the main descendants of British settlers. (55% of Northern Ireland's population is Protestant). They are more likely to view the conflict in constitutional and security terms and are primarily concerned with preserving the union with Britain and resisting the threat of a united Ireland[4].

▶ Nationalists/Republican, usually of Catholic religion and descendants of the native Irish. They identify with the Republic of Ireland (the South). Their views fall into two main categories: Those who perceive the issue as a nationalist struggle for self-determination, looking back to the historical integrity of the island of Ireland. Others approach it as a problem of corruption and unfair practice by successive Unionist governments between the 1920s and the 1970s which, if removed, would create a society in which both Catholics and Protestants could live peacefully together. These categories are not discrete and the balance between them has shifted backwards and forwards since the formation of the state[4].

▶ Between 1801-1921 Ireland was part of the United Kingdom and was ruled from London. The Easter Rising insurrection in Dublin in 1916 and the War of Independence that followed aimed to end British rule.

▶ In 1921, Ireland was partitioned. Twenty six counties gained independence from Britain. The other six north-eastern counties remained part of the United Kingdom. Partition was a solution, but was not the outcome either side wanted. The new state of Northern Ireland had a Protestant majority (roughly 65% at the time of Partition). Sovereignty was retained in Westminster (London), which had responsibility for defence and foreign policy, Northern Ireland acquired its own parliament with considerable autonomy[4].

▶ The Treaty that brought about the Partition caused deep divisions amongst Nationalists in Ireland and led to a bloody civil war in the South (1921-1923) between those who accepted Partition and those who did not. Partition was reluctantly accepted by the Unionists, who had wished for the whole of Ireland to remain within the United Kingdom. They feared absorption into a united, mainly Catholic and poorer Ireland. Nationalists in the North wanted independence from Britain and a united Ireland. They were seen as a threat by Unionists.

▶ From the time of partition, political tension was constant in Northern Ireland as a result of a chronically insecure Protestant majority, an alienated Catholic minority, electoral malpractice, ethnic bias in the distribution of housing and welfare and a declining economy[4].

▶ In the late 1960s, a civil rights movement began, calling for equitable access to political power, social provision and cultural recognition. It met with resistance from the Unionists. Protests were suppressed by the Northern Irish state, leading to violent confrontations. Violence escalated between the two communities and paramilitary groups emerged - initially as self defence groups for their local areas. In 1969, the British Government deployed the British Army on the streets of Northern Ireland to restore order. For some nationalists, the introduction of the army was a symbol of oppression. A militant Republicanism emerged in the form of the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA/IRA) with the aim of removing the British presence and reuniting Ireland. The Provisional IRA started its campaign of violence, which prompted violence from Loyalist paramilitaries (the UDA and the UVF), leading to a protracted sectarian conflict in which civilians comprised the majority of casualties.

▶ The conflict continued for 30 years. The ongoing exposure to violence deepened community divisions and led to the perpetuation of old grievances and the creation of new ones.[4]

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4. Darby, J (2003), Northern Ireland: The Background to the Peace Process.

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▶ Between 1974 and 1994 there were seven attempts to reach a political and constitutional settlement. All foundered in the face of local opposition.

▶ By the late 1980s the IRA and the British Government had reached a stalemate, with neither able to defeat the other. Within the Republican movement this led to an internal debate on the sustainability of the conflict. The movement towards a more political approach was facilitated by the emergence of new leaders; most notably, John Hume, as leader of the nationalist Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) and Gerry Adams, as President of the Republican Sinn Féin, a political party with links to the IRA. This movement towards political negotiation was mirrored within the Loyalist paramilitary organisations.[5]

▶ In 1985, the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed between the British Government and the Republic of Ireland. This agreement, which gave the Irish Government a consultative role in Northern Irish affairs, paved the way for co-operation between the two governments on the management of the conflict. It was an important pre-cursor for the later peace processes.[5]

▶ In the 1990s there were several years of 'behind the scenes' negotiations, including secret talks between the IRA and the British Government to sound out the conditions under which Republicans would consider calling a ceasefire. This, together with negotiations undertaken with the Irish Government, led to conditions leading to the first ceasefires of 1994-1995 and the movement towards establishing frameworks for a comprehensive settlement.

▶ The ceasefire collapsed in 1996 and Sinn Féin was excluded from the peace talks. Negotiations became bogged down in procedural issues and were suspended in 1996, when tension and violence spread across Northern Ireland

▶ Initially, momentum in the peace process was driven by parties in the centre ground on both sides: the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) and the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) with the support of smaller middle ground parties such as the Alliance Party and the Women's Coalition.

▶ Sinn Féin, linked to the IRA, acted as an intermediary in negotiations with the IRA and during the later stages of the peace negotiations became the largest party on the Nationalist side. The Democratic Unionist Party, which initially opposed the peace process, became the largest party on the Unionist side. Later these two parties which had held more extreme and seemingly intransigent views became the dominant parties in their communities and formed a power- sharing government.

▶ Between 1997 and 1998 complex negotiations led to the Good Friday Agreement in April 1998 which contained constitutional and institutional provisions to address:

  » relationships within Northern Ireland; between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland; and between both parts of Ireland and Britain
  » commitment to the mutual respect, the civil rights and the religious liberties of everyone in the community and acknowledgement of the suffering of victims of violence and economic, social and cultural issues
  » the decommissioning of arms held by the various paramilitary groups
  » the release of members of paramilitary groups from prison
  » the reform of policing within Northern Ireland

5. Darby, J (2003), Northern Ireland: The Background to the Peace Process.

## Question and answer session on the Northern Ireland Peace Process

Questions after the presentation centred on whether peace in Northern Ireland is likely to hold.  The speakers from Glencree responded that there continue to be outbreaks of violence in Northern Ireland.  These include both violent confrontations at a local community level and attacks by 'dissident republicans', namely armed groups who are opposed to the peace process and British involvement in Northern Ireland.

It was stressed that this is not the first peace process in the country.  There have been a number, which have not led to lasting peace.  The Treaty of 1921 that led to the partitioning of Ireland and the creation of Northern Ireland was cited as an example of a process that had been presented at the time as a form of 'peace agreement'.

However, on this occasion, it was felt that the situation is different.  This process was viewed as being inclusive. Previous processes had negotiated with 'friends' alone. They had neither engaged, nor attempted to reach a settlement with the more extreme groups. It was noted that on this occasion, procedures and mechanisms had been put in place to achieve structural and systemic change; for example, by reforming institutions such as the police.  Institutions for power-sharing had been agreed at the British and Irish Government level and this had facilitated acknowledgement of the complex web of relationships between both parts of Ireland and Britain.

## What brought about change in Northern Ireland?

*Discussion led by Sue Williams*

Participants were introduced to the findings of a study, carried out in 2007, of local perceptions of Northern Ireland's transition from conflict to relative stability and peace.  In the study, interviews with a range of political, paramilitary, civil society and government figures sought to identify the elements that had been crucial in bringing about change in the seemingly intractable conflict.

It was reported that the interviewees had attributed change to the cumulative effect of scattered peacebuilding initiatives.  These enterprises had different aims and audiences and had been carried out by different sectors of society.  But when combined their effect had been to address five aspects of the situation:

► **Political Options:** Opening up new alternatives for political settlement, and involving more and more of society in these discussions
► **Injustice:** Righting past wrongs, and ensuring that mechanisms exist to prevent, or correct, future injustices
► **Cross-Community:** Dialogue or other cross-community experiences - activities of mutual benefit, in order to ensure that everyone has a stake in the shared society of the future
► **Diversity:** Valuing and managing diversity fairly and equitably, and enshrining principles, structures and behaviours to guarantee this
► **Conflict:** Channels of communication for grievances, and methods and mechanisms for resolving conflicts in future, to ensure that the cycle does not begin again.

**(Source:** Sue Williams' presentation to the workshop, based on Fitzduff, N. Williams, S. (2007:25), How did Northern Ireland Move Towards Peace?, Reflecting on Peace Practice, CDA Collaborative Learning Project)

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The study had concluded that "These results are interesting primarily for the spread of target groups and change envisaged.  Certainly, this portrays a situation in which a lot of different people have been working in a variety of ways to change different aspects of their society.  In a contested situation, where groups of people experience marginalisation and exclusion, the mere fact of these different initiatives and objectives, with the underlying acknowledgement of grievance and willingness to address it, seemed in themselves to begin to reduce the sense of exclusion and alienation." (Fitzduff & Williams, 2007:P18).[6]

**Table 1:** Addressing which aspect of the situation?
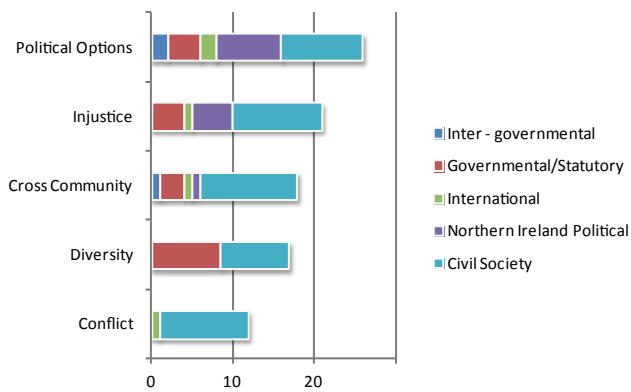


*Source: Williams, S (2007)*

Sue explained that the sectors (or actors) involved in addressing these five dimensions varied, but civil society was understood to have played a key role in all (as shown in Table 2).  Civil society was perceived by many in Northern Ireland as making an important contribution to the development of a climate in which new ideas could be explored.

**Table 2:** Whose initiative?
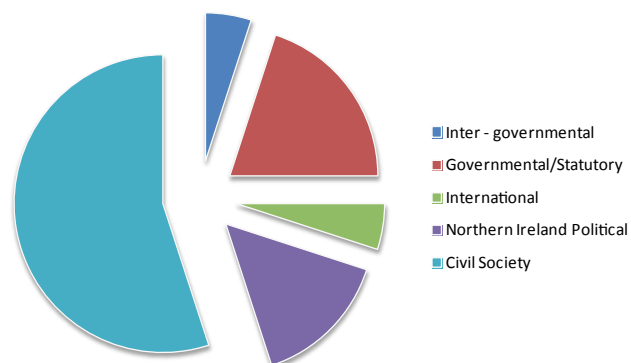
6.  Fitzduff, N., Williams, S. (2007: 25), 'How did Northern Ireland Move Towards Peace?', Reflecting on Peace Practice, CDA Collaborative Learning Project.

# Session 2

## Civil Society and the Peace Process in Afghanistan, Dialogue led by Michael Semple

Michael opened proceedings in Session 2 with the reflection that everyone in Afghanistan has their own story of the conflict; recollections of events that cannot be expunged from memory: indiscriminate violence, massacres, false imprisonment. As a result, for some in Afghanistan the prospect of peace through negotiation is a mirage. For others, it is a bitter pill that has to be swallowed.

Michael proposed that the first Bonn Agreement had aimed to set the stage for the incorporation of the people's voice. One of its core messages had been that regardless of background, ethnicity, and gender, the people of Afghanistan were to have a say in determining a peaceful future for the country. Yet people across the country said that they did not feel adequately represented by the process at Bonn, or by those tasked with taking the agreement forward. He suggested, therefore, that ten years on, as Afghanistan moves towards another phase of peace negotiation, it is important to consider whether anything has changed.

Michael noted that today, civil society in Afghanistan is strong and focused. Yet the situation is fragile and security is a serious concern. There are fears that the freedoms of the last ten years will be lost if negotiations proceed. Michael suggested that in this context, civil society faces a number of questions: Should the Afghan Government talk to the Taliban? What steps need to be taken so as not to revert to a cycle of violence shaped by ethnic, tribal, economic and regional factors?

Opinion is divided. Some say that the Taliban should be drawn into peace talks out of necessity. Others believe that the consequences of this will be negative.

Michael recommended that in analysing the question of what needs to be done, it is also important to consider the possible scenarios that Afghanistan might face in 2014 and beyond. He presented three options for consideration:

**Scenario A:** Political continuity despite low-level Taliban insurgency.
In this scenario, Afghan security forces hold their own against the Taliban. The 2014 presidential election delivers an effective and legitimate leader. The US and its allies maintain financial assistance. Support for the insurgency decreases and the Taliban become less willing to fight. Michael suggested that while this is a good outcome, it seems highly unlikely.

**Scenario B:** Escalating violence amounting to civil war.
In scenario B, the presidential election is messy – or postponed. Presidential authority is diminished. Most NATO forces withdraw. The Taliban expand control over Pashtun areas and blockade provinces. Ethnic politics dictate the stance of local administrations and security force units. The US and its allies are reluctant to maintain financial assistance in the face of human rights violations. Michael suggested that while this is a disastrous outcome and the most pessimistic, it is arguably the most likely to occur.

**Scenario C:** Peace Settlement with an end to major violence.
In this scenario, political engagement produces a Taliban ceasefire which holds. A successful presidential election takes place in peaceful conditions and Taliban fighters are reintegrated into the political and cultural system. NATO withdraws on schedule and there is sustained international assistance focused on reconstruction and development. It was felt that this is clearly the best outcome, but it requires considerable work to make it achievable.

It was suggested that in each of these scenarios, a key consideration is: 'Who are the Taliban?' Namely, what are their origins? Who constitutes their leadership? What is their structure and what are their political ideas? Where do their alliances and affiliations lie? What is their military capacity and their territorial reach? What are their mechanisms of parallel administration and how have/are they changing between generations?

Michael presented a snapshot of the Taliban in 2012. He suggested that they are in a state of ferment, in which there are multiple perspectives on the talks and a sense of impending change. Yet, there is a willingness to fight on and they are actively preparing for a new season. There is an appreciation of the risk associated with civil war and an increased anti-ISI sentiment within some factions. Currently there is an emphasis on internal discipline and on wooing the local population.

Michael proposed that despite the fact that the chain of command remains intact so far, and their real political strategy is skilfully hidden, there is evidence of a Hanafi-Wahabi divide on de-linking from Al Qaida. An insider-outsider dynamic (non-Kandaharis, Harakatis) is also at play. The pragmatists within the Taliban hold a stronger voice than previously, but are still struggling to gain traction. Therefore, the likely trajectory of the insurgent

# Session 2

strategy 2012-2016 is as outlined in Table 3 below.

Taking this into consideration, Michael felt that their demands and aspirations in peace negotiations are likely to be:

## Taliban demands and aspirations (known)

Ultimate demands:
► Complete withdrawal of foreign troops
► Imposition of an "Islamic system"
► Restoration of the Islamic Emirate

Intermediate demands:
► Release of prisoners
► Ending of "terrorist listing"
► Removal of corrupt leaders and war criminals
►
BUT : What they might settle for?
► Honourable share in the state
► Islamisation formula
► Framework agreement on troops, terrorism, prisoners and sanctions

Michael proposed that some parallels could be drawn with the processes in Ireland. In Ireland, different sides to the conflict had differing ideas of cultural identity and politics. The differences in aspiration were seemingly irreconcilable and the conflict was operating on multiple levels. In Northern Ireland, an evolution in the leadership of the political parties affiliated with the violence facilitated the ceasefire and a movement towards peace.

The negotiation of the release of prisoners was a core issue. Parties to the conflict and the people of Northern Ireland had to engage with difficult questions about what reconciliation means. Civil society had to consider what role it was going to play in the peace processes.

He suggested that, in the context of Afghanistan, civil society could play a number of roles. In relation to reconciliation as a cross-cutting theme, civil society can be pro-peace. It can advocate for sustained constructive international engagement. It can hold an agnostic position on whether there will ever be a ceasefire, but it can engage in the resolution of the national level conflict. In terms of supporting Afghan peacemaking, civil society can choose to have a role in convening Afghan stake-holders, supporting peacemakers, providing the means for back-channel diplomacy and in lobbying and educating.

## Discussions based on Michael's presentation:
The question of whether the Government should talk to the Taliban provoked discussion of who the Taliban are, who negotiations should be with and which internal and external actors need to be involved. The conflict comprises a heterogeneous conglomeration of actors, including Pashtun, Tajik, Uzbek, Arab and Pakistani insurgents with differing motivations for involvement in the violence. Participants suggested that the complexity of the many layers of conflict in Afghanistan lies in the fact that there are so many actors, operating internally and externally, nationally and locally. The question, therefore, arises: who to make peace with?

**Table 3:** Michael Semple: Insurgent Strategy 2014 and beyond
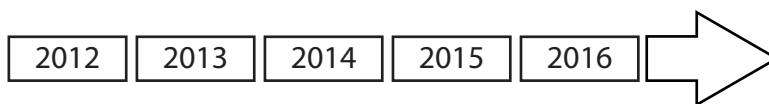
| 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | → |

| STAGE OF STRUGGLE | MILITARY CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE NATO INVADERS | | | OVERTHROW OF THE PUPPET REGIME | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| TERRITORIAL PRESENCE | STRENGTHEN INFLUENCE OVER RURAL POPULATION | ISOLATE DISTRICT CENTRES | START TO TOPPLE DISTRICTS | ISOLATE AND START TAKING PROVINCIAL CENTRES | ISOLATE AND TAKE KABUL |
| PREFERRED TACTICS | IEDs, assassinations, infiltration | | IEDs, assassinations, infiltration, local sieges | Assassinations, defections, cutting roads | Expansion of liberated territory |
| ISLAMIC INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS | ACCEPT FINANCIAL AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE FROM ALL QUARTERS, MAINTAIN SOME DENIABILITY | | | PROJECT AFGHANISTAN AS MODEL OF ISLAMIST RESISTANCE | |
| OPPORTUNITIES | CHICAGO SUMMIT | PROVINCIAL ELECTION | PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION | COLLAPSE OF GOVT FINANCE, POST-NATO DEFECTIONS | FRACTURING OF GOVERNMENT & SECURITY STRUCTURES |

It was felt by some that the current lip-service being paid to the negotiations as an 'Afghan-led' process is unhelpful. It was suggested that it is unrealistic to expect a sustainable peace process unless regional and international consensus on negotiations and any subsequent peace agreement is achieved. For that to happen, motivations for engagement need to be genuine. Yet, the lack of transparency around the process means that the people do not know who is involved in negotiations, who is representing the Taliban, and what the red lines of any negotiations are likely to be. Meanwhile, the violence continues on the ground. Little has changed for the majority of Afghans.

It was suggested that the voices of people of all ethnicities need to be incorporated to achieve a sustainable process. Participants emphasised that steps must be taken, and guarantees given that there will be reform to deliver rule of law and justice. Yet participants felt strongly that the people of Afghanistan, the civilians who have been the greatest victims of the violence, continue to have little say. Their voices are not heard.

In response to a question from Michael about how many US troops are likely to remain, some participants suggested that the number was not relevant. Foreign troops come and go and the people of Afghanistan seem to have little say. Instead, what is relevant is consideration of the type of peace that the Afghan people want to achieve. Some participants, however, did express fears that the withdrawal of troops will result in decreasing financial flows from the international community, exacerbating poverty and intensifying the economic drivers of local conflict.

It was noted that historical precedent indicates that when the infrastructure in Afghanistan collapses, it is NGOs who pick up public service delivery; yet any such efforts may be jeopardised by the Taliban or insurgent attacks (for example, the burning of schools). It was proposed, therefore, that as NATO troops prepare for withdrawal in 2014, the people of Afghanistan must consider what services and public assets they want to save and how the needs and voice of the general population on such issues can be transmitted.

It was proposed that the focus of negotiations on only a few 'relevant actors' needs to be broadened. The inclusion and representation of the interests of all is vital to ensure sustainability and to build a momentum towards peace.

In discussion of the scenarios that Michael had presented, it was felt that scenario B is the most likely and it was suggested by some that it is already happening. It was reported that in the eastern provinces, especially

Laghman and Jalalabad, new insurgents groups are being formed (with the assistance of the ISI) in anticipation of 2014. In response, the Northern Alliance forces are regrouping due to a perceived vacuum in effective state-run defence forces.



*Participants take some time out to visit Dublin Mosque, 23 February*

Participants proposed that this regional dimension makes genuine negotiation with the Taliban very difficult. However, Michael suggested that despite the fact that the Pakistani Taliban use the Haqqani group as camouflage when they wish to enter Afghanistan, a clear line can be drawn between the Afghan and the Pakistani Taliban. When negotiation with the Taliban is raised as a possibility, it is with Mullah Omar, not the Pakistani Taliban, that such negotiations should take place. If the mainstream Taliban decide to enter into negotiations, this will have an impact on other Taliban in the country.

Confidence among participants in the possibility of achieving lasting peace (scenario C) was very low. It was felt that a critical aspect was missing - one that had been integral to the peace processes in Northern Ireland. This was the incorporation of mechanisms and infrastructure to deliver systemic change and institutional reform. It was suggested that these are the necessary ingredients that lead to justice, rule of law and equality, and provide

means for addressing grievances that prevent recidivism.

It was felt by some that reference to the Taliban reminds many Afghans of the negation of individual liberties, ethnic and sectarian violence, structural and institutional discrimination and the egregious abuse of women's rights.  Therefore, in building a better future, transparency of negotiating positions and discussion of "red lines" is crucial.

# Session 3

## Group Exercise, Opportunities for Peacebuilding

In Session 3, participants worked in three groups to carry out an analysis of the opportunities and threats presented to peacebuilding in the three scenarios outlined by Michael.

The results of the discussion are summarised in the tables below.

### Scenario A:
Political continuity despite low-level Taliban insurgency: Opportunities and threats to engagement with peace processes and peacebuilding

**Opportunities**
- ▶ The existence of a relatively independent, committed civil society supporting values of freedom of speech and human rights, in particular women's rights
- ▶ The existence of reformist and pro-peace young people
- ▶ Afghan public opinion (against a return to war, conflict and crises)
- ▶ Peace negotiations by government, civil society and high peace councils
- ▶ Chicago and Tokyo conferences and the existence of international commitments through strategic partnerships post withdrawal
- ▶ International political pressure on regional countries
- ▶ Koh-Ahan programme
- ▶ Transfer of equipment to Afghan Security Forces

**Threats**
- ▶ Corruption, poor governance, lack of rule of law and a culture of impunity
- ▶ Lack of political parties committed to democratic values and nation-building
- ▶ Flaws in Election Laws
- ▶ Neighbouring countries' continued and powerful support for Taliban
- ▶ Lack of motivation, commitment and co-operation in national security forces
- ▶ Burgeoning drug mafia
- ▶ Decreased international development assistance

# Session 3

Scenario B:

Escalating violence amounting to civil war: Opportunities and threats to engagement with peace processes and peacebuilding

## Opportunities

- ► Civil society organisations are playing an increasing role in advocacy, public awareness raising, peacebuilding and monitoring of elections
- ► Women's participation in political, social, cultural and economic issues has increased
- ► Increased number of educated youth
- ► Heightened political awareness and consciousness among some political parties
- ► Strong media (audio and visual)
- ► General population holds bitter memories of war and are frustrated by prospect of further conflict
- ► The initiation of peace processes
- ► The timeline for the drawdown of international troops provides opportunitiy to prepare public opinion regarding assumption of responsibility
- ► Democratic systems are based on those embedded in the constitution
- ► Private sector growth and expansion of networks
- ► Social infrastructure has been established and continues to develop
- ► Some institutions are engaged in national building projects
- ► Strong focus on technical, economic and strategic partnerships by international community
- ► Increased partnerships among Afghans reflected at international level
- ► A focus on strengthening the capability of ANA and police
- ► Security in Afghanistan is closely related to regional and international security

## Threats

- ► The lack of transparency in the peace process
- ► Foreign interference (particularly from neighbouring countries)
- ► Low public awareness
- ► Warlordism, Malikism, tribalism, patronage
- ► Corruption, lack of rule of law, lack of access to justice
- ► Recurrent mistakes by international forces
- ► Increased tension and differences between the Government of Afghanistan and the international community
- ► Lack of balanced development efforts across regions and provinces
- ► Lack of poverty-reduction efforts
- ► Flawed government strategies and discriminatory practices
- ► Culture of impunity and amnesty
- ► Low capability and lack of co-ordination between Afghan Security Forces
- ► Creation of paramilitary forces

**Scenario C:**

Peace settlement with end to major violence: Opportunities and threats to engagement with peace processes and peacebuilding

## Opportunities

▶ Empowerment of civil society and its role in society
▶ Interest in peace among Afghanistan's citizens
▶ Acceptance of peace processes by divergent groups
▶ Institutionalisation of human rights and democratic values
▶ Respect for the authority of the Constitution
▶ Faith in electoral systems and existence of political parties
▶ Securing national unity and development of nation-building processes
▶ International pledges to support Afghanistan in development and reconstruction spheres post 2014
▶ Empowerment of Afghan Security Forces
▶ International and regional support for peace processes
▶ Withdrawal of international troops results in the removal of one of the opposition groups' (Taliban's) stated drivers of conflict.

## Threats

▶ Sacrifice of civic values in the peace process
▶ Women's role in the peace process is marginalised
▶ Lack of attention to human rights conventions by divergent groups
▶ Lack of 'executive guarantees' for the peace process
▶ Lack of faith in peace processes
▶ Lack of government and international community support for active civil society organisations
▶ Decreased financial support for Afghan Security Forces and for Afghanistan in general
▶ Interference of foreign countries
▶ Refusal of NATO forces to withdraw
▶ Remaining international forces do not comply with Afghan laws

# Session 3

**Discussion of opportunities and threats**

Consideration of the opportunities and threats in all three scenarios highlighted that a number of issues fell into both categories; for example, the withdrawal of troops, nation-building projects and the empowerment of Afghan National Security Forces.

The withdrawal of troops was considered to have the potential to deliver beneficial effects (the removal of one of the Taliban's stated motivations for the insurgency), but to have potentially negative ones too (for example, decreasing financial investment by international community once drawdown is complete[7], lack of capacity in Afghan Security Forces to prevent an escalation of conflict). On balance, participants felt that troop withdrawal should be grasped as an opportunity for building peace.

Nation-building projects were considered as an important opportunity for fostering peace, but with the caveat that they would present a threat if manipulated to fit particular patronage, ethnic or tribal agenda rather than as a means of fostering development for all ethnic groups. Ensuring continued progress on health, education and employment, particularly for the most vulnerable and marginalised, was viewed as a critical component of future nation-building projects.

The empowerment of Afghan National Security Forces was viewed as an important step for Afghanistan, but only if improvements continue to be made in the capability, commitment, co-operation and co-ordination of the ANSF. Yet it was felt that it would be hard to manage these aspects if the budget was limited. The existence of paramilitary forces was viewed as a particular threat in Scenario B (Escalating violence amounting to civil war).

Key opportunities identified within all three scenarios included:

- ▶ The increasing strength of civil society and its role in advocacy, peacebuilding and in public awareness raising, particularly as it relates to women's rights.
- ▶ A consensus among the general population that there is a need for peace and a peace process
- ▶ The existence of an enthusiastic, pro-peace youth
- ▶ A heightened political awareness and consciousness among some politicians and political parties.

It was strongly felt that in a context of deteriorating security and a lack of rule of law, and one in which civic values are quickly subordinated to, or become victims

of political and military strategy, these opportunities, particularly as they relate to the participation of women in peace processes, will be extremely challenging to achieve. It was suggested that the international community had consistently disregarded the intellectual input and ideas of civil society, and ignored important opportunities to invest in, or provide support for, civil society. There was a strong feeling that on the whole civil society's input continues to be viewed with indifference.

A number of participants argued that the Constitution represents an important legal framework that the State needs to respect and enforce fully. However, its weakness lies in the fact that there is little public awareness of it, and of the freedoms enshrined within. This, in turn, leaves the Constitution vulnerable in future negotiations.

A major threat identified within all three scenarios was the lack of transparency and inclusiveness of the current peace processes. As a result, it was felt that it will be difficult to engender trust in the process. A lack of rule of law, too, was seen as a critical issue likely to pose a threat in all three scenarios. Some participants questioned how sustainable peace can emerge from the embers of decades of conflict when a veil of silence is drawn around past human rights violations and atrocities. They stressed the importance of embedding systemic and institutional change, as was the case in Northern Ireland. This is important not only to break the cycle of impunity that they feel has embedded itself in Afghanistan's political life, but also to promote a wider respect for, and confidence in, the rule of law in Afghanistan. Participants believed that without it, warlordism, feudalism, tendencies to ethnic mobilisation, patronage and discrimination are likely to flourish.

The unwillingness of the Taliban to negotiate, the fragmented nature of the insurgency and the lack of desire and ability of regional actors, most notably Pakistan, to engage in the peace process were all seen as major threats to peace within all future scenarios.

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7. It was suggested that financial assistance from the international community has, over recent years, decreased to levels comparable to those provided in 2001.

# Session 4

**Meeting with Pádraig Mac Lochlainn, Sinn Féin Parliamentary Representative for Donegal North East in the Irish Parliament, the Dáil.**

Pádraig spoke to participants about his personal experience of the conflict in Northern Ireland and its impact on his family. He described how his father, an IRA prisoner, spent nine years in UK prisons for activities related to the conflict, and his uncle, also an IRA volunteer, spent five years in prison in Northern Ireland. He stressed that he was never involved in violence himself and by the time he was in his early twenties, the first IRA ceasefire was coming into effect.

He described how, in his twenties, he had taken part in a peace initiative with Glencree aimed at bringing the two sides of the conflict together. This meeting had involved experts giving a global perspective on peace and reconciliation. At that time, he said, he would never have believed that Northern Ireland could travel as far towards peace and stability as it has today.

Pádraig suggested that, while one can never transfer circumstances from one conflict zone to another, there are perhaps some core principles and lessons that may be exchanged. He explained that, as part of a political party that had been linked to the violence, his three key lessons for negotiations were:

► There are no winners or losers in negotiations - you will not achieve in negotiations what you could not achieve by war and violence
► There are no simple solutions. There will be many setbacks, but it is important to stay on the path.
► Engage your own people - those you represent. They have to be convinced about the path towards peace.

He stressed that one of the biggest challenges facing those involved in any peace processes is to convince their own constituency of the need to accommodate 'the other' and to make concessions for the benefit of all. He stated that Sinn Féin was very effective in working with its own membership and with members of the IRA involved in, or supportive of, the conflict to convince them of the benefits of a peace strategy and in persuading them to follow a peaceful path.

(For information on Sinn Féin and the IRA, see background information on Northern Ireland, page 5. For the role of prisoners in transforming the narrative of conflict see page 25.)

**Question and answer session with Pádraig Mac Lochlainn.**

During the question and answer session, participants pointed out that unlike Northern Ireland, Afghanistan does not have strong political parties and suggested that this is likely to curtail a movement towards a sustainable negotiated settlement. Pádraig agreed that the situation in Afghanistan was more multi-faceted, but questioned whether civil society could, particularly in the absence of strong political leadership, fill that gap. He highlighted the crucial role played by civil society groups in pushing forward the peace process in Northern Ireland and in working towards a human-rights based solution.



*Pádraig Mac Lochlainn, Sinn Féin parliamentary representative for Donegal North East addresses the workshop participants at the Irish Parliament, the Dáil with Jawed Nader interpreting.*

He emphasised that the role of civil society is more important than that of politicians, who "come and go". He described how civil society in Northern Ireland had provided an independent space for people to talk. Civil society, he said, was a long time ahead of political leaders in calling for an end to the violence. Politicians had to restrain their egos, adapt to this and learn that there was a critical role for civil society - initially in creating the political space for change, and later in delivering popular

support for peace.  He queried whether there is the space in Afghanistan for activists to play a similar role and for them to "shine a light" on the path to peace for the politicians.

Participants asked about the processes of building trust and how that was achieved in Northern Ireland.  In response, Pádraig cited how Sinn Féin's leader, Gerry Adams, had stated at the beginning of the peace process that while those involved in the conflict did not have to trust each other, they had to trust the process.  He emphasised that in Northern Ireland, there was a need for 'outside' guarantors to achieve this.

In answer to a question about the role of women in the peace process, he highlighted the key role women had played and pointed out that the Sinn Fein National Executive is 50 per cent female.

Finally, participants asked for his view on peace, reconciliation and amnesties.  Pádraig replied that every peace process has to find its own answer to this question and to the question of how best to achieve a just and equitable future for all.  He added that in his personal view, there has to be an amnesty if the full truth is to be told. However, he said, he is conscious that many of the families of the victims of conflict do not share that view.

# Session 5

## What Role for Women and Civil Society Engagement in Peace Processes: A Perspective from Northern Ireland.

*Presentation by Professor Monica McWilliams, former Chief Commissioner for Human Rights in Northern Ireland (2005-2011). Monica, a member of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition, was part of the Multi-Party Peace Negotiations leading to the 1998 Good Friday Agreement.*

Monica described her evolving journey in Northern Ireland from community activist, to political activist, to human rights activist. She emphasised that when a society has been normalized to unacceptable levels of violence, peace will take a long time to manage. It is a process.

She highlighted that in any journey away from conflict, it is "civic" society that lays the foundations for peace. Monica proposed that, in Northern Ireland, it was "civic" society which helped to open the space for a new politics in an environment of entrenched and partisan traditional political identities. She stated that in undertaking this kind of role, "civic" society had to be brave and strong, but also to show leadership and understanding. It had to talk about what is possible.

She suggested that "civic" society must also try to organise itself, be prepared for any eventuality and work in concert. She emphasised that if it is disorganised and unable to work together, then it will not be civic society's voice that is heard. Instead, the intransigent voices that speak a negative message will remain dominant, because their message will be easier to understand and more compelling in its simplicity.

Monica described the discrimination faced by Irish women throughout the conflict period and the lack of recognition given to their voice as they laid out their concerns. She explained how the formation of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition (NIWC) had been a reaction to this. Established by women with long histories of engagement in community activism and the civil rights movement, its membership was diverse, ranging from professionals and community workers to teachers, university lecturers and home workers from across the sectarian divide. Monica stated that they had made the leap from a "civic" society movement into the political arena, because they believed that the incumbent political leaders either ignored, or refused to take seriously, the issue of women's representation and participation in the peace negotiations.

Monica noted that the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition (NIWC) was the only political party that was accepted in all communities. Its representatives were the only ones at the peace table who had decided to talk to everyone. As a result, they took on the role of facilitating dialogue and encouraging political opponents to work together.

She stated that the NIWC were respected at the table, but this did not come easily. The men involved in the process had been disparaging. They had tried to undermine the confidence of the NIWC representatives. They had frequently attempted to humiliate them and strip them of their dignity. However, over time, these attitudes changed and the women had gained respect. They had proved that they were serious negotiators, who had a wide skills-set, had done their homework and had come to the meetings prepared. Importantly, the NIWC had also come to the table with ideas about what they thought might work; they came to the table not only with problems, but with solutions.

Monica stressed that a crucial part of negotiations in Northern Ireland had been discussion of systemic and institutional reform. Consideration of what could be done for the victims of the conflict and what was needed to build a better future was a transformational step. Every aspect of the situation was broken down, unpicked and addressed one step at a time (governance, policing, economic and social reconstruction and reconciliation). This separation of issues, Monica suggested, is why the negotiations worked. The time given to each of these issues allowed confidence in the process to develop.

Monica said that negotiations on the issue of human rights, dealing with the past and healing the trauma of the conflict had been an extremely difficult, but instrumental, part of the process. However, she noted her surprise that it had been easier than expected to reach agreement on some of the other, most complex issues in the conflict, such as police reform, the release of prisoners and power-sharing.

She highlighted how important it had been that the Good Friday Agreement (the Peace Agreement) had created safeguards for the future. The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission[8] was a product of the peace process which then paved the way for a Bill of Rights

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8. Monica McWilliams became Chief Commissioner for Human Rights in 2005 and held the post until 2011

for Northern Ireland. The Agreement had also made explicit reference to the need to acknowledge and address the suffering of the victims of violence. Importantly, it recognised the value of the work that was being done by many organisations to develop reconciliation, mutual understanding and respect between, and within, communities in Northern Ireland and between North and South. In pledging support for this work, the Agreement acknowledged its importance in consolidating peace and a political settlement.

Monica explained that the NIWC had ensured that some substantial issues were woven into the Agreement which would otherwise not have been addressed. These included issues such as women's rights, housing, healthcare and the importance of the integration of communities and schools - previously education and housing provision in Northern Ireland had largely been split along sectarian lines (Protestant and Catholic). Putting these on the table had led to important initiatives such as the adoption of the 'Education for Mutual Understanding' in the core school curriculum. Monica explained that when they had originally brought women's rights to the table as a constitutional issue, the other parties to the negotiations had responded that they were nothing to do with the war and could be sorted out after the negotiations. However, the NIWC held their ground on the issue ensuring that women's rights were not left as unfinished business to be addressed at some unspecified time in the future.

In her concluding remarks, Monica expressed support for affirmative action. She stated that there had been no affirmative action in Northern Ireland, but women were central to creating social change. However, she felt that their role has largely been overlooked. She expressed a hope that the women of Afghanistan would not be overlooked and that, one day, they would be talking, as she is now, of peace in their country.

### Question and answer session with Professor Monica McWilliams

During a short question and answer session with Monica, some participants expressed concerns about the corrosive effect of the attitudes towards positive discrimination that they had personally encountered. They stated that, while the position of women in Afghanistan has improved, people, even in the international media, are generally quick to suggest that women are given positions of authority due to positive discrimination, rather than the abilities and skills which qualify them for the post.

Monica acknowledged the difficulties that women face. She suggested that women will always face stereotyping

and challenges to their right to a place at the table. But, she stressed, it is important to find ways to condemn that kind of thinking and to be careful not to collude with it. Monica acknowledged the on-going challenges presented by such discrimination, stating that it exists everywhere. She pointed out that the Northern Irish Peace Agreement stipulated that 50% of the police in Northern Ireland had to be Catholic, but that no quota had been set for women officers.

### Follow-up discussion facilitated by Fahim Hakim and Sue Williams

Participants felt that Monica's story and the journey of the women's movement in Northern Ireland from local activism to the political arena was an educative and inspiring one. Some suggested that perhaps the most important lesson drawn from Monica's presentation was the emphasis that she placed on the process of building peace and the need to be strategic in harnessing the momentum gained through peace initiatives.

Participants also noted the importance of the message that the process itself, if inclusive and properly managed, can be a means of addressing the trust deficit; it can open up new space for the discussion of very complex issues. Of interest too, was the emphasis Monica placed on the role of civil society activists and advocates in addressing this 'trust deficit'. Participants reflected on the fact that in a situation where politicians are motivated by their own political agenda and a desire to retain power, civil society and peace movements can act as enablers of dialogue, inspiring greater confidence in the process, preparing the ground for co-operation and giving politicians the courage to step out from behind entrenched identities.

It was noted that civil society in Northern Ireland had achieved this in a difficult environment; one in which they were viewed by political parties, at best, as insignificant and, at worst, as an irritation. Support from international actors had been important in enabling their voice.

Participants drew parallels between the women in Northern Ireland, in Afghanistan and elsewhere in the world, where women face the problem of discrimination, but strive to overcome it by raising their voices and encouraging others, including men, to help them in this task. Examples were given of how religious scholars and other men from Swat in Pakistan had assisted in promoting women's rights through Islamic teaching. It was suggested by some participants that it is important to continue work with male-dominated organisations in general, and the High Peace Council (HPC), in particular, to engender support for the inclusion of women in the peace process. It was felt that regardless of the impact of the HPC on any final negotiations, they are an important channel of influence.

The need for perseverance and unity were important messages to be drawn from Monica's presentation. It was suggested that the women had succeeded because they had stood united over time, and never lost sight of what they had personally set out to accomplish.

It was noted that Monica had stressed that they were listened to, and achieved influence in major issues (such as the Bill of Human Rights for Northern Ireland), because of the quality, not the quantity, of their work and the unique perspective that they brought to the negotiating table. Their desire was not for political power, but to encourage greater confidence in the process among the general population by presenting an unbiased and unique approach. They had brought to the table issues that the 'traditional' politicians would not have addressed.

Participants also discussed the fact that the process had categorised the drivers of the conflict, so that they could be discussed in depth, one by one. It was felt that it was critically important that these categories: governance, police reform, development, social, economic and cultural issues and truth and reconciliation had all been addressed in the final peace agreement.

Differences in culture and context between Afghanistan and Ireland were also noted. It was mentioned that Monica and Padraig's contributions had pointed to the need for 'trust in the process'. However, it was proposed that this is lacking in Afghanistan. If, as at present, the Taliban will not even recognise the HPC, then it is unrealistic to expect any progress. Others, however, felt that there are enabling factors in Afghanistan too. The predisposition of the general population towards peace, the advances made in the past ten years and the reform of institutions were seen as positives. However, the external hand in Afghan affairs was viewed as a factor that had not been present in Northern Ireland.

Some participants suggested that in Northern Ireland, civil society had managed to come together despite differences in opinion to create a unified voice to call for peace, but in Afghanistan, civil society is a burgeoning one. It was suggested that the different networks there do not necessarily work together or share the same agenda.

It was noted by some participants that NGOs tend to look at civil society from a limited perspective, whereas it was felt that civil society is a broad concept that encompasses unions, religious organisations and leaders. Some participants suggested that religious civil society and the influential role that could be played by the Ulema in Afghanistan has, to a great extent, been ignored. It was pointed out that it is important that civil society does not

become a mechanism for exclusion. Civil society must not only play to what it perceives to be its own constituency, but should have the confidence to engage with, and engender confidence in, the wider population.

Attention was drawn to the fact that Monica had used the term "civic society" rather than civil society, which is different. "Civic society" tends to suggest that it is a society based on certain rights and principles, and citizenship. "Civic movements" are usually considered to be broader than the activities and roles of organized civil society.

It was suggested that it is important to define what is meant by the term civil society – particularly in conflict settings. Though the term is in common usage, it is most commonly defined by what it is not. For example, it does not include the government. It does not include the military. It was suggested that the process of defining what civil society is helps organisations to reflect on their own motivations, legitimacy and mandate. By mapping where the boundaries of civil society are, organisations have to reflect critically on whether their actions are solely for their own benefit (and directed at their own membership), or whether they are for the collective good and based on principles and standards that are of benefit to the whole society and for the future of society.

It was suggested that this kind of process is critical and is not dissimilar to that which should be expected of governments and politicians in any stable and secure state. Within the political sphere, when political parties are contesting elections, they may play to a particular constituency, but when they take on the role of government, the standards expected of them are much higher. They are expected to become a government of all the people and to work to the benefit of the whole of society, not just those who share their own political, ethnic, religious or economic views or interests. If a state and its politicians do not meet these very high standards, their actions can be easily exploited and their legitimacy can easily be called into question.

# Session 6

## Analysis of peacebuilding: a discussion led by Sue Williams

Session 6 aimed to introduce participants to a number of peacebuilding tools that might assist organisations in their analysis of current peacebuilding work in Afghanistan. It built on discussions in previous sessions that had highlighted the need for peace processes and programmes to address different dimensions of the conflict.

### The Grid of Peacebuilding work, developed by Mari Fitzduff[9] (see below).

Sue noted that in a conflict context where peacebuilding is often in the form of discrete efforts across multiple levels and locations, assessing the cumulative impact of peacebuilding efforts can be extremely difficult. She explained that the Grid of Peacebuilding Work (taken from the publication, Responding to Conflict, 1999) was

developed as a relatively simple tool to assist in this process. It aims to give a clear picture of what work is already being done and identify where specific blockages in peacebuilding may lie - 'work not being done, or sectors not being helped'[10] .

Attention was drawn to the fact that during discussions in session 1, change in Northern Ireland was perceived to have resulted from the cumulative impact of initiatives addressing a number of different dimensions of the conflict (political, injustice, cross-community, etc). It was suggested that the grid builds an important understanding of which of these dimensions are, or are not, being addressed in any given context - local, provincial or national.

### THE GRID OF PEACEBUILDING WORK

| Kinds of work | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Location and Levels** | Conflict Management Work | Peace Education and Training | Mutual Understanding Work | Anti-intimidation Work | Justice and Rights Work | Political Options Work |
| **Community Level** (marketplaces, community associations, etc) | | | | | | |
| **Religious Institutions** (Mosques, etc with leaders and members) | | | | | | |
| **Educational Institutions** (Schools, with youth, adult learning centres) | | | | | | |
| **Workplaces** (industries, businesses, etc) | | | | | | |
| **Security Services** (Police, military, prisons) | | | | | | |
| **Political Institutions** (political parties, traditional leaders/elders, local government, state government, etc) | | | | | | |
| **Legal/Justice System** (courts, judges, lawyers, etc) | | | | | | |

9. See, Mari Fitzduff,
http://www.brandeis.edu/ethics/about/bios/fitzduff.html

10. From Responding to Conflict, 1999, based on typologies of community relations, by Mari Fitzduff

Definitions of the categories of work that may be used to form the top line of the grid were shared with participants.  It was made clear that these could be adapted and amended according to circumstance.  They included (taken from Responding to Conflict, 1999):

**Conflict management work -** developing and offering a range of alternative approaches for handling disputes effectively and non-violently.

**Peace education and training -** educating people about the concepts and skills of dealing with conflict non-violently and promoting peace (in schools, educational institutions, community associations, religious organisations, workplaces, political institutions).

**Mutual understanding work -** working to decrease ignorance, suspicion, prejudice and stereotyping between individuals and groups who are in conflict with each other.  Emphasis is placed on improving communications and understanding through various programmes that bring people together to listen to each other and discuss their differences.  Sue drew attention to the fact that in Northern Ireland, processes seemed to work when it was recognised that it was not a case of deciding between contested pairs of options, but that there are also issues on which opinion must be allowed to differ.

**Support for marginalised groups -** enhancing confidence, capacities for positive action and empowering excluded groups in a society.

**Anti-intimidation work -** working to decrease various types of threats, harassment, intimidation and verbal abuse directed against an ethnic, political or religious group.

**Cultural traditions work -** affirming and developing cultural confidence and acceptance of diversity within a society.  This work is based on belief that feelings of alienation can result from the exclusion or denial of a particular culture, and that the development of cultural confidence can contribute to the capacity of a community to enter into negotiations with other communities without feeling too insecure about its own culture.

**Justice and rights work -** developing collectively-agreed principles of justice and rights in society.  Emphasis is placed on enabling conflicting groups to see issues of justice and rights as common concerns that they share and which can be of benefit to all, rather than a case of 'our rights 'over 'their rights'.

**Political options work -** facilitating political discussion within and between conflicting groups. This enables people to listen to those whose preferred political options are different from their own.  It is aimed at trying to develop alternatives that can satisfy the valid political aspirations of the majority of people.

It was noted that the column on the left of the grid lists the sectors, locations, target groups and levels where work might be done and that these too can be adapted to the local situation as needed. Once completed, the grid should give a clear indication of opportunities for new work, joint work and mutual support.

It was suggested that where there are issues that are not being dealt with at all (the empty boxes), groups or organisations are then able consider what they could achieve if they decide to intervene, or whether there are others, better placed to do this work more effectively, who should be alerted to the need for action.

The grid is considered to be a particularly useful tool '*in times of rapid change (to keep a vision of the whole), at moments of despair (to appreciate what is being done) and when groups seem to be competing (to demonstrate the different levels or locations at which organisations operate as a means of allaying fears of future viability)[11]'* .

### Reflecting on Peace Practice (RPP) Conflict Analysis Matrix

Participants were also introduced to the Reflecting on Peace Practice (RPP) Conflict Analysis Matrix (see below). It was noted that RPP is an international project that aims to improve the effectiveness of peace programmes through analysis of, and the application of, lessons learned from peacebuilding initiatives across a range of conflict contexts.   RPP developed the matrix to help organisations summarise how analysis, strategy, and planned programme objectives are linked to each other (see table below).
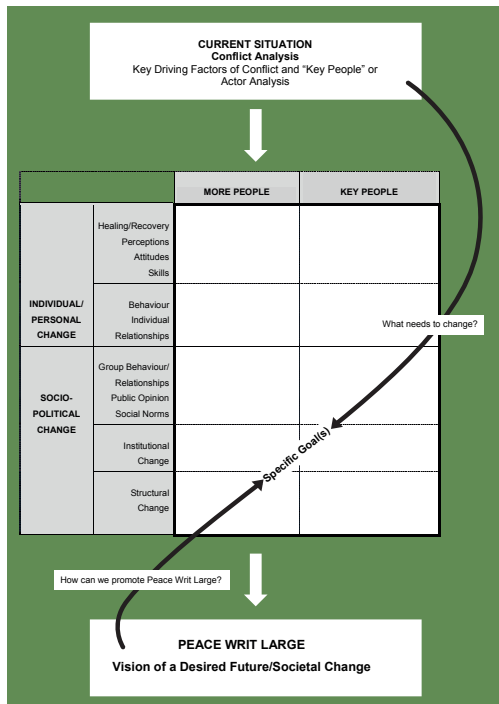
In the RPP matrix, activities are broadly divided according to whether their targets are "more people" (large numbers of people, taken as individuals) or "key people" (those who are particularly influential or otherwise able to have more than individual impact).  It was also noted that there is a distinction to be drawn between the various kinds and levels of intended impact. "For example, a programme may aim to mobilise many people to be less prejudiced (top-left block in diagram below: more people, individual change in attitude) or persuade members of government to work for legislation to establish a Human Rights Ombudsman's office (bottom-right block: key people, structural change.)[12]"

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11.  Responding to Conflict 1999

12.  Fitzduff, N. Williams, S. (2007:15), How did Northern Ireland Move Towards Peace?, Reflecting on Peace Practice, CDA Collaborative Learning Project

Sue reported that in Northern Ireland, analysis of peace initiatives had demonstrated a spread of change envisaged and target groups across all boxes in the matrix. However, the initiatives which were mentioned as having the most impact were (taken from Fitzduff & Williams 2007: 19-24):



• **Hume-Adams talks (1988-93)**
These talks were initiated by politician, John Hume, then leader of the Social Democratic Labour Party and Member of Parliament. They aimed at including Republicans in political talks, in part as a way to change Republican behaviours. This was seen at the time, as well as upon reflection, as a very risky strategy. They were especially interesting because, as many respondents pointed out, they depended on contacts and relationships built discreetly by Catholic Church. Soon afterwards, both the British and Irish governments were beginning to make confidential contact with Republicans, and some civil society groups began to prepare the ground for public acceptance of this necessary step.

• **Work with Prisoners (1971 onwards)**
Work with prisoners was largely done by civil society, and aimed both at reforming the treatment of prisoners and including prisoners' views in the political process. This work was seen as having contributed to change primarily because of its political and transformative nature. Prisoners were identified by many as the single most important constituency in contributing to the changed situation. The development of their distinctive role depended crucially on both the building of relationships of trust with members of civil society and the leadership of figures within their own groups inside the prisons. This convergence led them into extensive dialogue with prisoners from other (opposing) armed groups, leading them to work together on common needs and accept differences. Having built cross-community relationships while in prison, they continued and expanded them when released, and made it permissible for their own wider communities to engage with 'the other.[13]'

• **Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985**
The Anglo-Irish Agreement was initiated by the British and Irish governments. It gave the Irish government a consultative role in Northern Ireland's affairs. Although this fell short of joint authority, the Agreement institutionalised and made permanent the co-operation between the two governments on the management of the conflict. It was a recognition by the British government that Westminster held limited legitimacy among the Nationalist community and could not secure a lasting political settlement on its own[14].

• **Fair Employment Legislation**
Fair Employment legislation was a government initiative aiming both to correct past injustices and to ensure fair treatment in future.

Sue noted that these were very different kinds of interventions, by different kinds of actors, with different target audiences, aiming at different kinds of change. However, they were considered to have had the most impact because they:

► Came from different sectors (civil society, governmental, political, international), and engaged many stakeholder groups
► Addressed the key driving factors of the conflict
► Aimed at changes at socio-political levels, yet in different domains
► Addressed the need for structural and systemic change, as well as behavioural and attitudinal

Sue explained that in Northern Ireland, individuals and organisations involved in peace initiatives had carried out some preparatory analysis and strategic planning. But hypothetically these would have been more effective if they had been more widely shared and constructive linkage and mutual support had been encouraged.

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13. Fitzduff & Williams (2007:22).

14. Darby J cited in Fitzduff & Williams (2007:23)

# Session 7

## Group Discussion of Gaps in Peacebuilding in Afghanistan

Participants were invited to break into three groups and to use the grid as a stimulus for discussion about gaps in current peacebuilding in Afghanistan. The groups' feedback was as follows:

| Group 1: | Group 2: | Group 3: |
|---|---|---|
| Building links with CS in neighbouring countries | Promoting communications between peace organisations regionally and internationally | The creation of local peace networks to empower the people in the peace process |
| Encouraging and maintaining civic participation with particular emphasis on highlighting the achievements of the last decade (freedom of expression, women's rights) and how this has benefited all, thereby negotiating public support for the preservation of "red lines" as they relate to freedoms gained | Capacity development in peacebuilding in organisations across the country | Expanding advocacy efforts on peace |
| Working to raise the profile of civil society as a neutral body in relation to peace processes - harnessing civil society capacity as mediators | Working with institutions to develop capacity, particularly as it relates to conflict resolution | Activating 'social teams' |
| Working with Shuras and District/Provincial Councils | Working with religious civil society and involving it in the peace process | Engaging with religious civil society to build trust |
| Encouraging the active participation of women in peacebuilding | Empowering women at local levels | Raising public awareness of rights and enlisting the participation of local women and men in rights advocacy |
| Changing the methodological structure and strategy of the High Peace Council | Working with youth groups to mobilise them as advocates of peace | Engaging with the media and encouraging discussion of peace |
| Improving access to information, co-ordination and mobilization (through better use of existing mechanisms rather than through the creation of another co-ordinating body). | Establishing 'Peace' Campaigns - film festivals, etc | Identifying, collecting and sharing information and research on peace building and conflict |
| | Facilitating peace and reconciliation efforts | Assisting in the development of good governance |
| | Conducting roundtables and promoting dialogue about peace - involving the media | Creating jobs |

# Session 7

Priorities for immediate action were considered to be:

- ► Building peacebuilding capacity generally
- ► Establishing peacebuilding groups in the provinces and encouraging networking between them
- ► Mobilising youth as advocates of change
- ► Empowering women and encouraging their active participation in peace processes
- ► Building trust at all levels
- ► Encouraging good governance
- ► Mobilising a body of civil society to act as neutral, independent mediators
- ► Building external peacebuilding support networks (regionally and internationally)
- ► Developing peace education
- ► Reforming the High Peace Council's Provincial Committees to become active peace councils
- ► Creating jobs

The issue of building trust, though an activity in its own right, was also considered to be a thread that needs to be woven through all peacebuilding. Participants emphasized the need to create a relationship of trust between civil society and the state; the state and the people, civil society and the people and within civil society itself.

Participants felt that it is essential for these priorities to be acted upon at all levels (local, provincial, national and, where appropriate, across national boundaries). However, community and provincial level work was identified by all groups as the most important. Participants discussed how good practice that already exists could be expanded. For example, it was suggested that peace council meetings could be organized between different districts to exchange views and lessons. In particular, it was felt that it would be beneficial for councils in regions that have a majority of a particular ethnicity to make contact with councils that have a different ethnic make-up.

Participants proposed that current peacebuilding needs to be expanded to incorporate more locations - so as to envelop more people and more key people. Suggestions included expanding work with:

- ► Ulema
- ► Security forces
- ► The private sector
- ► The families of combatants
- ► Political parties
- ► Victims groups
- ► The media

It was proposed that many of these groups already have coalitions through which approaches could be made.

The facilitators stressed that organisations need to exercise caution and not attempt to become experts in everything. By using the grid and building an inventory of work being done and the gaps that exist, coalitions can be built, so that work can be done effectively and in such a way as to maximise impact.

Attention was drawn to the need to ensure legitimacy and authenticity of action. It was proposed that it is essential for civil society to keep coming back to the question of who benefits from the work that they are doing? Throughout the world, some charities and community based organisations are working only for the benefit of their own ethnicity or religion, or for their own organisational interests. It was suggested that if the community questions an organisation's motivation, or believes that it is doing a job only because it is being paid to do so, this is a serious concern. Civil society needs to work to be accepted and to prove that it is working to bring values that will benefit an entire society, both now, and in the longer term.

However, it was noted that this can be an extremely difficult task. Civil society is often tasked with bringing together competing values – for example, the incorporation of values and traditions from the past with universal human rights standards. People will only believe that an organisation is working for an entire society if it addresses these concerns sensitively, conforms only to the highest standards, and makes sure that peace is for the benefit of all and the future.

# Session 8

## Post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina, A Presentation by Ian Bancroft, Executive Director, Transconflict.

Ian reported that the conflict over Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is defined by a clash of three competing versions of 'self-determination'. He noted that both Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats largely oppose the continued existence of Bosnia, in contrast to the Bosniaks, whose identity is associated with a Bosnian state. Each group asserts that its position is the only legitimate one. This tension is further compounded by the persistence of a defensive 'minority syndrome'; with each group perceiving itself as a minority within a given context:

1. The Bosnian-Serbs perceive themselves as a minority within the territory of Bosnia and Herzgovina
2. The Bosniaks perceive themselves as a minority within the wider regional context, and
3. The Bosnian-Croats perceive themselves as a minority within the Muslim-Croat Federation

Each competing version of 'self-determination' embodies a different conception of national identity and state allegiance. The challenge is how to resolve these competing claims to sovereignty over the same territory.

Ian explained that the Bosnian state is comprised of two entities (the Federation Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Republika Srpska) and an autonomous unit, Brcko District (which is held in condominium by the two entities). The Federation is further divided into ten Cantons.

He clarified that Bosnia-Herzegovina is a 'consociational confederation' which has four distinguishing features:

► The central government is constituted by a 'grand coalition' between representatives of the distinct groups in the population
► The groups enjoy 'segmental autonomy' in organising and running their affairs
► Criteria of 'proportionality' ensure fair, equitable access for members of different groups to public office and resources—this would normally include appointments to civil service, police, military and judicial organs of the state
► Representatives of the segments enjoy 'veto' rights over constitutional changes and legislative decisions which they determine to adversely affect their group's interests

Ian explained that Bosnia and Herzegovina is regarded as an "extremely weak and dysfunctional postwar state that would probably not have survived without substantial international support over the decade following the war.[15]" He suggested that though the possibility of a repeat of the conflicts of the nineties has been diluted, the potential for isolated outbreaks of low-scale violence should not be excluded. Nor should the quality of the peace attained be ignored. Ian emphasised that the absence of violence does not necessarily guarantee the existence of constructive relationships between individuals and communities.

### Post-war Reconstruction

Ian noted that the post-war reconstruction strategy has been comprised of three core elements:

► Reforming political institutions
► Influencing the behaviour of elite populations
► Cultivating nongovernmental organizations

Several core activities were implemented in the post-war period, including:

► Delivery of humanitarian relief
► Demobilization of armed forces
► Deployment of peacekeeping and other policing related missions
► Democracy-building
► Economic reconstruction
► Inter-ethnic reconciliation

He reported that there has been a tendency to ignore the positives and extenuate the negatives. Enormous progress has been made on a number of fronts, in particular in:

► Disarmament and security sector reform
► European integration
► Refinement of international engagement – in the international instruments and rapid response
► International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia

### IDPs and Returnees

Ian explained that The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was entrusted with assisting the government to implement the Agreement on Refugees and Displaced Persons (Annex VII of the DPA). This stressed that the "early return of refugees and displaced persons is an important objective of the

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15. Bose, S. (2002:60) Bosnia after Dayton: Nationalist Partition and International Intervention, Oxford University Press, New York

settlement of the conflict". The agreement aims to:

- ▶ facilitate freedom of movement
- ▶ improve the security situation
- ▶ achieve property restitution
- ▶ reconstruct housing

Ian explained that issues have arisen in relation to majority - versus - minority returns. It has been particularly hard to promote minority returns - where refugees/IDPs are returning to an area where their ethnic group does not constitute a majority. Particular challenges result from:

- ▶ ethnic discrimination
- ▶ limited livelihoods opportunities
- ▶ war-damaged infrastructure (roads, electricity and water systems)
- ▶ legal and administrative barriers to accessing health and social services
- ▶ security concerns
- ▶ impunity for suspected war criminals
- ▶ lack of reconciliation between communities

### Reconciliation

Ian noted that aside from work to promote inter-ethnic dialogue and interaction – particularly amongst young people - dealing with the past has formed the main plank of reconciliation efforts.

### Justice and Human Rights

Ian explained that there are numerous examples of projects to promote the rule of law and uphold human rights. These include:

- ▶ REKOM – a regional network of civil society organisations seeking to establish a body to uncover the facts of crimes committed during the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina
- ▶ The monitoring of war crimes trials
- ▶ Pressure on governments to issue apologies
- ▶ The compilation of detailed lists of every victim of the war compiled by the Research and Documentation Center (IDC)
- ▶ Anti-discrimination initiatives, particularly focusing on minority groups
- ▶ The emergence of human and civil rights defenders

### Mutual Understanding

Ian noted that there are a variety of initiatives to promote inter and intra-ethnic understanding and diversity:

- ▶ Inter-ethnic and inter-religious dialogue, particularly

targeting young people and religious communities
- ▶ Intra-ethnic dialogue – to overcome splits within ethnic communities
- ▶ Reintegration projects targeting former combatants
- ▶ Common history books and curricula projects
- ▶ Cultural events

### Political Options Work

Political engagement was described as focusing upon:

- ▶ Constitutional reform proposals produced by civil society with a focus on reforming the Dayton Peace Agreement
- ▶ Issue-based campaigning – particularly surrounding general elections – focusing on health, education and economic development
- ▶ Facilitating dialogue between main political actors/ political elites
- ▶ Track two diplomatic initiatives – i.e. fostering reform coalitions and connections between business/ academics

### Good Governance and Security Sector Reform

Ian stated that good governance and security sector reform has been promoted through:

- ▶ A code of ethics for elected and public officials
- ▶ Strategic planning at the local level
- ▶ Partnerships between municipalities and civil society
- ▶ Public oversight of the security sector (and establishment of the Gendarmerie and community policing)
- ▶ Community security councils
- ▶ Revitalising public spaces

### Civil Society and Peacebuilding

Ian concluded that one of the key planks of transitional justice has been the prosecution of war crimes, not just at the International Criminal Tribunal in the Hague, but also in domestic courts. He explained that many civil society organisations have monitored the domestic trials to make sure that they are in accordance with the highest international standards.

He noted that civil society organisations have also been instrumental in the push for the establishment of a Regional Truth Commission (REKOM - see above) and in putting pressure on their governments to apologise for their conduct during the war. For example, in March 2010, the Serbian Parliament issued an apology for the genocide in Srebrenica.

However, there is a growing awareness that more is

needed. Ian felt that the work carried out by a Sarajevan NGO to record the name of every victim of the conflict in a publicly accessible register is important, because it helps prevent revisionism and liberal interpretations of what happened between 1992-95 (98,000 names have been registered so far - categorised into civilian and military casualties).

Ian suggested that ethnicity-blind approaches to recognising the victims - and punishing the perpetrators - of crimes in the former Yugoslavia provide the most concrete way of achieving mutual understanding of attitudes about the region's past, present, and future. However, the vehement reactions to these kinds of initiatives epitomise the difficulties of securing broadly recognized and legitimate forgiveness and apology in the Balkans.

In conclusion, however, Ian suggested that the role of the region's political elites in this process raises important questions about whether acts of forgiveness or apology can be made on behalf of entire ethno-national groups, particularly where many members of a "group" or "community" do not seek forgiveness or to apologise.

# Session 9

## Visions for the future

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In the concluding session of the workshop, participants were asked to work together to define the key elements that they would wish to be covered in any future peace strategy for Afghanistan. They identified the following core principles.

Afghanistan's future Peace strategy should:

- ► Be based on the social and religious values of Afghanistan
- ► Be built on an Islamic understanding of peace
- ► Define a commitment to human rights and good governance
- ► Recognise the need for transparency of process that allows every community and segment of society to be involved without discrimination
- ► Ensure absolute commitment to exclusively peaceful means of resolving differences
- ► Acknowledge and develop mechanisms to ensure commitment to, and observation of, rule of law, women's rights and social justice

It was agreed that the statements provide a useful signpost for future work. It was recommended that these preliminary thoughts need to be refined further and that the meanings behind some of the terms should be articulated and clarified.  Participants also felt that, if progression is to be made towards peace, then civil society must fully accept its responsibility to take an active role in the peace process in Afghanistan and encourage others to do likewise.  In doing this, it needs to strengthen existing relationships between stakeholders; invest in forging relations with new types of stakeholder, and commit to analysing and mending fault lines that have developed in old relationships where trust has ebbed.  International actors must find appropriate ways in which to support the actions of civil society actors to foster peace.

BAAG is a unique advocacy and networking agency which aims to support humanitarian and development programmes in Afghanistan.

BAAG works closely with Afghan civil society groups, reflecting Afghan views and aspirations. Founded in 1987, it currently has 27 member agencies. BAAG is the only coordinating agency of its kind in the UK.

It is a source of expert advice for policymakers, donors, media and the public and also provides the secretariat for the Associate Parliamentary Group for Afghanistan.

**Member Agencies:**
► ActionAid
► Afghan Action
► Afghan Connection
► Afghanaid
► CAFOD
► CARE International UK
► Children in Crisis
► Christian Aid
► Concern Worldwide (UK)
► Glencree Centre for Peace & Reconciliation
► Global Witness
► Hope Worldwide
► International Medical Corps
► Islamic Relief Worldwide
► Khorasan
► Marie Stopes International
► Mercy Corps
► Minority Rights Group International
► Muslim Hands
► Oxfam
► Refugee Action
► Relief International
► SAFE
► Tearfund
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