

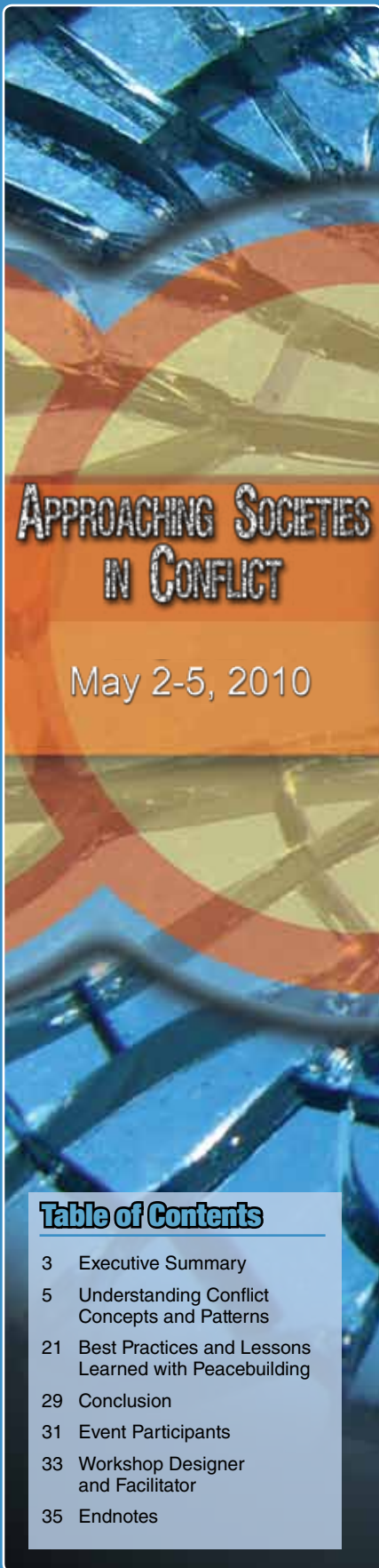
May 2-5, 2010



APPROACHING SOCIETIES IN CONFLICT

Center for Stabilization and Reconstruction Studies
Naval Postgraduate School
Monterey, California





ABOUT THIS EVENT

The Center for Stabilization and Reconstruction Studies partnered with Dr. Tatsushi Arai, a leading conflict transformation academic and peaceworker, to develop *Approaching Societies in Conflict*, held in Monterey, California from May 2-5, 2010. This interactive workshop, which convened 36 experienced stabilization and reconstruction practitioners, was designed to provide participants with the opportunity to discuss the personal and organizational challenges inherent in working in conflict and post-conflict environments, learn new concepts and strategies for helping warring parties move beyond violence, and share best practices and lessons learned from their experiences. Practitioners, who hailed from 11 countries around the globe, have been involved in post-conflict transformation initiatives in countries such as Afghanistan, Colombia, Eritrea, Indonesia, Liberia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Palestine, Sri Lanka, and Sudan, among others.



The Center for Stabilization and Reconstruction Studies (CSRS) is a teaching institute which develops and conducts educational programs for stabilization and reconstruction practitioners, including representatives from US and international nongovernmental organizations, intergovernmental organizations, government civilian agencies, and the armed forces. Established by the Naval Postgraduate School in 2004 through the vision and support of Representative Sam Farr (CA-17), CSRS creates a wide array of programs to foster dialogue among practitioners, as well as to help them develop new strategies and refine best practices to improve the effectiveness of their important global work.

Located at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California, CSRS also contributes to the university's research and graduate degree programs. For more information about CSRS, its philosophy, and programs, please visit www.csrs-nps.org.

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“ As practitioners, we are constantly evolving our vision and our ways of working. Dr. Arai’s way of working is unique: He has a psychological approach to problems that is very interesting. Because of that, I engaged in some real introspection about my professional work, which I didn’t expect to do. ”

– Former IGO member

Executive Summary

From the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, to the genocide in Rwanda, to the war in Iraq, the chronicles of recent history are steeped in violence. Researchers have analyzed conflict’s causes and outcomes, while practitioners have developed strategies for helping adversaries move beyond violence and commit to peaceful means of resolving disputes. In fact, one think tank has even created a tool that puts a price tag on the diverse costs – human, economic, societal, developmental, and environmental, among them – incurred by countries

in conflict. Yet despite its huge costs to a society, its systems, and people, conflict persists. According to the *SIPRI Yearbook 2010*, an annual compendium of data on the world’s conflicts and military spending trends released by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2009 witnessed 17 major active armed conflicts,¹ while peacekeepers conducted 54 operations globally at a cost of \$9.1 billion.²

Given that conflict is part of the human condition, how can practitioners and warring parties craft more effective strategies for addressing intractable disputes? As the result of many failed initiatives, international actors have realized that Western dispute resolution strategies simply are not appropriate

WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

APPROACHING SOCIETIES IN CONFLICT WAS DESIGNED TO HELP PARTICIPANTS:

- Explore how and why destructive social patterns develop in conflict-affected societies
- Identify ways to anticipate how these patterns may influence the practice of peacebuilding
- Develop skills and capacities to design and implement effective, conflict-sensitive initiatives for social change
- Expand professional networks among diverse practitioner communities that operate in conflict-affected environments

Approaching Societies in Conflict convened 36 experienced practitioners to craft new strategies for addressing intractable conflict.

in many cultural contexts: Not only do they impose external mechanisms for conflict resolution, but they often do not meet stakeholder needs for seeking justice or promoting societal healing. As a consequence, actors have strived to develop a more robust toolbox of strategies for helping adversaries address the root causes of conflict and harness the peace potential inherent in their own unique identities and cultures.

To explore these issues in-depth, the Center for Stabilization and Reconstruction Studies held an interactive workshop for practitioners May 2-5, 2010, in Monterey, California. The event, *Approaching Societies in Conflict*, was designed and facilitated by Dr. Tatsushi Arai, a peaceworker and academic, who teaches at the SIT Graduate Institute in Brattleboro, Vermont. Participants included 36 representatives from US and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), government civilian agencies, the armed forces, education organizations, and think tanks. Practitioners, who have been involved in post-conflict transformation initiatives in countries such as Afghanistan, Colombia, Eritrea, Indonesia, Liberia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Palestine, Sri Lanka, and Sudan, among others, brought a wealth of insight and experiences to share with their peers.

Facilitator Dr. Arai introduced participants to some of the critical concepts undergirding contemporary research, such as the relationship between basic human needs and aggression and conflict dynamics and attributes, as well as non-traditional approaches to analyzing root causes and working with host nation actors to transform conflict.

UPCOMING EVENTS FOR 2010

INTERACTIVE TRAINING WORKSHOPS FOR STABILIZATION AND RECONSTRUCTION PRACTITIONERS:

- *Building Capacities for Cross-Cultural Communication*, to be held August 15-19, 2010, in the greater Washington, DC area
- *Joint Humanitarian Operations Course*, two sessions of which will be held September 21-22 and September 23-24, 2010, in Monterey, CA
- *Working in the Same Space*, to be held November 1-4, 2010, in Monterey, CA
- *Exploring the DDR-SSR Nexus*, to be held December 6-9, 2010, in Monterey, CA

For more information on CSRS events, please visit www.csrns-nps.org.

The course featured presentations; group discussions; and an in-depth case study, a fictional scenario which focused on building the capacity of an established regional NGO based in the Northwest Frontier Province of Pakistan, which was designed to provide participants with the opportunity to apply new insights gained from the course and design innovative strategies for addressing societal ills contributing to organized militancy. Two expert practitioners – Mr. Faiysal AliKhan, Director, FIDA/Rural Support Programmes Network, Pakistan and Mr. Azhar Hussain, Senior Vice President of Preventive Diplomacy, International Center for Religion and Diplomacy – provided real-world context to the Pakistan case study; offering an overview of their country's conflict history, encouraging participants to think more deeply about how their worldviews and actions would be perceived by local partners and communities, and facilitating discussions about the challenges and successes participants had experienced in the field as they sought to improve their cultural

fluency and develop more successful ways of working with diverse stakeholders.

CSRS has been developing immersive workshops for S&R practitioners since 2005, holding courses on a wide array of important topics, including economic recovery; security sector reform; and the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of ex-combatants back into mainstream society, to name just a few. Participants value the opportunity to explore topics in-depth, bringing their own experiences and insights to bear on course material; sharing best practices and lessons learned with their peers; and building cross-community networks they can leverage in the future. Said a former IGO member at the *Approaching Societies in Conflict* workshop: "As practitioners, we are constantly evolving our vision and ways of working. Dr. Arai's way of working is unique. He has a psychological approach to problems that is very interesting. Because of that, I engaged in some real introspection about my professional work, which I didn't expect to do." ●●

“ People benefit from conflict. It’s not about ethnic affiliations or border crossings; it’s about resources. ”

– Government civilian agency member

Understanding Conflict Concepts and Patterns

What is conflict? Referencing his academic work, Dr. Arai defined conflict as an evolving process of dynamic interdependence between two or more actors who are pursuing their respective aspirations, but are unable to achieve them, because they view that another stands in their way. According to leading conflict theorists, violence arises when individuals are unable to meet basic human needs that they view as both essential to life and nonnegotiable

in nature. Author John Burton says that these needs can include such values as security, personal and environmental control, rationality, recognition, and identity.³ If they are met with roadblocks to achieving these needs, individuals will typically seek to overcome obstacles or seek alternative satisfiers. When they are unable to do so, individuals will ultimately aggress, creating a state of social disorder.

In repressive nations, the ruling elites seek to subordinate individual needs to those of the society or the institutions. Such systems, which disenfranchise the majority of a society’s population while privileging a few, require coercion to maintain. As such, they are inherently unstable. It is the rare dictator who will be



Mr. Richard Chema, US Department of Justice (pictured standing), discusses the role of unmet basic human needs in contributing to violence.

able to impose authoritarian rule for decades: Driven both by deprivation and desperation, oppressed peoples will often rise up against their persecutors in hope of winning back the opportunity for self-actualization.

Conflict Patterns

How does conflict form? According to Dr. Arai, extended conflict often follows certain predictable and ineffectual patterns, as parties repeatedly strive to achieve their goals. Such behavior can create conflict spirals, where hostile attitudes and repetitive behaviors harden, making violence a self-fulfilling prophesy. Some of these elements include:

- **Emergence** – A conflict arises between two or more parties and becomes apparent.
- **Escalation** – Hostilities intensify, often resulting in repetitive patterns of goal-seeking behavior or behavioral patterns that change qualitatively and quantitatively.
- **Polarization** – Parties label relationships and issues as either adversarial or friendly, often using pejorative language to describe their counterparts and their desires.



Drawing on his work in such countries as East Timor, Rwanda, and Taiwan, workshop facilitator Dr. Tatsushi Arai presented core concepts and nontraditional frameworks participants could use to design innovative conflict transformation strategies.

- **Enlargement** – Parties bring in additional actors to gain support for their cause, thus widening the conflict.
- **Deepening** – Parties introduce additional issues, again widening the conflict.
- **Entrapment** – Parties overcommit to their positions in an attempt to “win.” By so doing, they lose the flexibility to make changes that address an opponent’s additional political, economic, and psychological investments.
- **Impasse** – Parties agree to communicate, but remain locked in goal-seeking behavior and attitudes, hindering their ability to move towards agreement. In negotiation, parties often reach an impasse when they fixate on positions, rather than underlying interests.
- **Stalemate** – While parties both perceive the conflict as intolerable, neither is willing to make key concessions to end it. Instead, each entity strives to prevail over the other, without escalating the conflict any further.
- **De-escalation** – Both parties work to reduce the current level of hostilities.

Conflict can occur on a personal, structural, or cultural level.



Personal violence occurs when an actor or group deprives another of physical health or the means of realizing cherished goals. In such a situation, both the actors and the tools of violence are usually clearly delineated. Structural violence occurs when repressive systems exclude individuals from societal resources because of certain interpersonal characteristics, such as socio-economic status, race, or religion. And finally, cultural violence occurs in a societal context that legitimizes and promotes the use of violence, be it direct or structural, often through the use of evocative symbols.

Dr. Arai used a real-life case study involving water supply issues in Rwanda to demonstrate how structural violence can continue to influence countries years after its outbreak. In the case study, an NGO completed a piping project linking two villages – but running through a third – to provide the second village with access to potable water. Although the NGO consulted with national authorities and received a green light for the project, it did not conduct any area assessments. Shortly after installation, the pipes were broken and key parts stolen, allegedly by residents of the third village. Practitioners gathered in groups to discuss some of the issues driving the vandalism and propose an alternate strategy for resuming the project and achieving a more successful outcome.

Participants suggested that the NGO hire a third party to conduct a conflict-sensitive inquiry; seek the input of all stakeholders and leverage respected elders as conflict mediators; use representatives



Workshop participants used a case study involving water supply issues in Rwanda to draw lessons learned from a failed initiative and explore ways to engage all key stakeholders positively in reconstructing their society.

from all three villages to execute needs assessments; conduct an environmental impact statement to ensure that any resulting solution would be sustainable; hold community dialogue sessions simultaneously in all three villages to discuss the governmental mandate and design a strategy for ensuring equitable water access; and position the project as a source of jobs for the three communities. However, they also discussed the fact that the conflict may be driven by issues related to the 1994 genocide such as persistent ethnic divides, a deep-rooted suspicion of the government, land title issues, and resource shortages. As a consequence, it would be critical that the water project originate from stakeholders and that all three communities buy into the final approach to avoid implementing another top-down initiative that would end in failure. This case study served to illustrate the truth that even though the presenting crisis – the genocide – is receding into the past, it still influences the perceptions and

behaviors of citizens in the current day. Actors need to be cognizant of the root causes driving conflict and take care that their initiatives mitigate, rather than worsen, these issues.

To illustrate key concepts involved with protracted conflict, Dr. Arai asked several participants to stand in a circle, ringing one group of attendees and surrounded by the rest of the participants. Given several balls, participants then threw them to their counterparts around the circle simultaneously, stating their names as they did so. The game required significant concentration: Players had to find their designated recipient, remain alert and ready to catch a ball tossed by their designated thrower, and remember to state names and throw the balls without striking bystanders. After continuing the game for a few minutes, Dr. Arai asked participants how this childlike game compared to conflict-affected societies. Building on a previous session on complexity, participants stated that they saw key elements of protracted social conflict involved in

the game, including multiple actors performing actions simultaneously, interdependently, and cumulatively. One player said that the greater the number of people involved in the game, the more difficult it became to execute it safely and accurately, while another stated that when one part of the game broke down, the entire system was compromised.

According to Dr. Arai, the game demonstrated the importance of maintaining a two-fold perspective on conflict: a fish's-eye view and a bird's-eye view. Individuals with a fish's-eye perspective focus on the immediate context and content of the conflict, while those with a bird's-eye view rise above the conflict, to study the holistic and historical nature of social change. During the game, the players maintained specific objectives and had a fish's-eye perspective on the proceedings, while those sitting outside the circle possessed a broader view on what was transpiring. According to Dr. Arai, practitioners need to work with conflict-affected parties to realize that both perspectives are necessary and complementary and apply them equally. Parties who possess a fish's-eye view can often get mired in the micro-processes of conflict; however, they are able to visualize concrete next steps for mediating disputes,



Pictured from left to right: Mr. Faiysal AliKhan, FIDA/Rural Support Programmes Network, Pakistan; Mr. Jeffrey Callahan, University of Alaska at Anchorage; Ms. Lavinia Hall, Mediators without Borders; and Ms. Monica Tanuhandaru, International Organization for Migration.

such as holding dialogue sessions or offering concessions. Meanwhile, those individuals who have a bird's-eye view may possess a strategic vision for transforming the conflict, but depersonalize the very human process of setting goals to attain it.

Both warring parties and actors often get trapped in two-dimensional thinking in conflict situations. For adversaries, two-dimensional thinking can manifest itself in each party's entrenched perspective of its societal history. For winners, this history will be one replete with chosen glories around which its members align; for losers, however, chosen traumas and a shared sense of humiliation and

loss will serve as a unifying force and rallying cry to action against their oppressors.

Meanwhile, actors may focus on antagonists' positions, striving to negotiate concessions rather than helping warring parties use alternative, or three-dimensional, ways of thinking about their disagreements. To implement new perspectives, Dr. Arai suggested that actors use time, space, and relationships in unexpected ways. Mediators know that helping warring parties acquire a different perspective on time is often critical to moving discussions forward. Adversaries are typically trapped in the past, endlessly rehashing a list of abuses another group has committed:



These violations may span years, generations – even centuries. However, actors also possess an entrenched attitude towards time, particularly with respect to peace building. Western negotiators typically strive to negotiate a ceasefire between parties, begin negotiations over key issues, and then craft a vision of a shared future. While this process may apply in some situations, it may not be appropriate for others. “What happens if you change the order?” asked Dr. Arai. “What happens if someone says he needs to have a sense of the future before he can drop his guns?”

Actors can help adversaries break destructive conflict cycles by looking at time in a fresh way. For example, they can help warring parties forecast the future that will likely occur if destructive patterns continue unabated: exploring the different costs protracted conflict will exact, from the personal suffering and lost opportunities experienced by a society’s people, to the high economic and infrastructure costs required to finance the war. Practitioners can also take a similar approach to analyzing the past, helping groups consider an alternative past that could have



Pictured from left to right: Dr. Elizabeth Snyder, University of Texas and Mr. Aimal Allaudin, United Nations Mine Action Center for Afghanistan.

emerged, given different actions by both parties. By moving discussions about the past to a fictional and less threatening realm, peaceworkers can help adversaries understand their role as agents of conflict and take responsibility for the acts of commission – and omission – that have contributed to the violence.

Mediators can also use space in effective ways, holding peace talks in neutral locations or alternating meetings between locations favored

by each party. For example, Richard Holbrooke convened the presidents of Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia in Dayton, Ohio, to conduct negotiations to end the Bosnian war and in Paris, France, to sign the final peace agreement.

Finally, mediators also seek to foster improved relationships by helping each group see the other’s perspective. The goal is not to force warring parties to accept the other’s position, but merely to understand it in a fresh way. To this end, mediators seek to move groups beyond negotiating fixed positions to exploring their underlying interests to see if they can find common ground. In addition, many peaceworkers also hold community dialogue sessions, inviting grassroots activists and local citizens to discuss the same issues being negotiated by their country’s leaders. While such groups lack the political clout necessary to enact policy reforms, these forums can help participants share opposing viewpoints in a safe setting and begin to build trust with each other. Actors have used this strategy in countries such as Northern Ireland

“Actors can help adversaries break destructive conflict cycles by using time and space in fresh ways. For example, mediators may help warring parties forecast the future that will occur if conflict continues unabated or envision an alternate past that might have emerged, given different actions by both parties.”

and Palestine and Israel to help adversaries understand each other's perspectives and begin to move forward.

As an example of using space in a new way, Dr. Arai offered the example of an elementary school in South Africa that suffered from a severe water shortage. Rather than solicit donor funding and technical expertise to build a well, a local businessman installed one himself and used a merry-go-around to power a pump attached to the school's second floor. Every morning, the school children pump their day's water, while local companies pay for advertising space on the publicly visible tank. According to Dr. Arai, the businessman used space in a creative fashion, making the well a public symbol by attaching its tank to the second floor of the school, rather than burying it in the ground. By so doing, the businessman increased community support for the project, from the teachers who encourage the children to use the merry-go-round to pump water, to the companies whose advertising pays for its ongoing maintenance. Such an approach, which originated within the community itself, may well prove more sustainable than an externally driven initiative designed to achieve donor objectives.

A host nation representative shared an example which demonstrated how actors can use — and sometimes even subvert — community expectations about relationships to increase their openness to competing viewpoints. Asked to mediate between the Pakistani armed forces and a tribe which had been displaced by a recent military operation, the NGO representative realized that traditional negotiation tactics would not help these two groups resolve their dispute. Instead, he entered

CHALLENGES OF WORKING IN POST-CONFLICT

To help participants explore the unique perspectives they brought to their work and begin building bridges between their respective communities, workshop facilitator Dr. Tatsushi Arai asked the group to discuss the greatest challenges and concerns they faced working in post-conflict societies. Participants stated that:

FEARS

Their greatest fears were:

- Not being accepted by all the different groups I work with (*a host nation NGO member*)
- Leading with an outcome in mind and thus ending up with an inferior solution (*educator*)
- Making an uneducated or uninformed decision that contributes to mismanagement of a conflict situation (*member of armed forces*)
- Being unaware of how my status — as a white, privileged US citizen — impacts my actions and affects others living in a conflict situation (*multiple contributors*)
- Raising the hopes of local stakeholders — and ultimately failing to deliver the improvements I've promised (*independent consultant*)
- Putting myself in danger through the work I do (*multiple contributors*)
- Being incapable of being genuine or of meaningful use — in other words, being totally irrelevant (*educator*)
- That I will become so cynical that I stop believing that people want to make a difference and are capable of doing so (*government civilian agency member*)
- That the emotional toll of living and working in conflict will mire both me and others in hopelessness (*multiple contributors*)
- That despite the work of thousands of actors, the world is more beset by conflict than ever before; so how can I possibly make a difference? (*multiple contributors*)

ENVIRONMENTS



CHALLENGES

Their greatest challenges were:

- Having to constantly assert my authority in conflict zones because I am a woman (*former IGO member*)
- Trying to get the political support of key stakeholders (*NGO representative*)
- The difficulty of working with US stakeholders to facilitate interagency cooperation (*government civilian agency member*)
- Fostering the confidence and trust required to work successfully with different stakeholders over long-term periods of time (*former IGO representative*)
- Building bridges with other actors who view their missions, values, and objectives as irreconcilable with others (*educator*)
- Remaining objective and optimistic about the potential for resolving intractable conflict, when it spans generations and seems to define the society (*armed forces member*)
- Understanding the positive — and negative — impacts of the work I am doing and whether changes will be sustainable over the long-term (*multiple contributors*)
- Finding ways to communicate that it is in people's self-interests to engage constructively in society, rather than resorting to violence (*government civilian agency member*)
- Ensuring that I practice conflict sensitivity to avoid creating yet more discord (*NGO representative*)
- Moving beyond the initial steps of providing security and reducing violence to truly practicing peace (*think tank member*)

Participants found the opportunity to share the fears and challenges they experience working in the field very beneficial. By expressing their vulnerabilities, practitioners helped create an environment at the workshop where all could share openly and reflect deeply on past assignments, using their insights and experiences as a teaching tool. In addition, the exercise proved illuminating: revealing that individuals working in post-conflict societies share the same concerns, despite representing a wide array of cultures, faiths, organizations, and professional experiences. Said a government civilian agency member: "It may seem scary that we all have fears and concerns about working in post-conflict settings. However, I prefer that to the idea that we have all the answers. We come from many different countries and organizations, but we are all dedicated to questioning our methods and learning from each other so that we can do what we do better."

into the conflict by assuming and then manipulating multiple roles: as a tribal member, authority figure, cultural other, and conflict transformation practitioner.

Donning the turban and robe of a tribal member of low status, the NGO worker invited members of the press to attend the meeting and then threw them out in full view of all participants. By so doing, he challenged conventional attitudes about status while solidifying his own authority; demonstrated his unity with tribal concerns; and proved that tribal members still retained power, because they were not subject to the manipulation of external parties. Next, the NGO representative spoke to attendees in a language they did not understand at a rapid speed, outpacing his translator's ability to keep up. As a consequence, attendees were forced to observe his body language in an attempt to decode his speech, moving the negotiation into the non-verbal realm. When he had obtained the full attention of all present, the NGO worker finally slowed his speech and delivered his central message: that tribal members were actually guests of the military and thus should accept the tents proffered by the armed forces. In the future, however; these roles would likely be reversed, with the military seeking favors from



Pictured in foreground: Ms. Leila Ezzarqui, Georgetown University.

the tribe. Instead of positing the exchange as a win-lose negotiation where the tribe was a victim of repeated military aggression, the NGO representative provided this community with a strategy for accepting much-needed relief from a hated adversary, while still saving face.

Developing New Strategies to Address Organized Militancy

Much of the workshop was focused on discussing a single case study:

collaborating with a Pakistani NGO to design a multi-year peace advocacy campaign to reverse and transform the tide of organized militancy, including Talibanization, in the country's Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP), a region which has experienced a raft of political and social ills, including poor governance and political instability, class tensions, and insecurity. Participants received a detailed packet of information on Pakistan and its history, including country maps and a conflict analysis detailing the nation's partition from India in 1947, three wars with India, and the multiple military regimes that have been in power since 1958. "We have had more than 30



years of military rule,” said a host nation representative, “People say that we are not a country with an army, but an army with a country.” According to the speaker, the result of Pakistan’s ongoing conflict is that its political growth has been quite stunted, resulting in a fractured national identity.

Discussing the concept of collective trauma helped participants prepare for the simulated collaboration with a Pakistani NGO. During periods of crisis, savvy leaders will often use painful national experiences, or collective traumas, as cultural touchstones to rally the people and solidify their own political power. By continually highlighting the losses the society has experienced, these leaders seek to create a shared national identity of victimhood, align citizens against a common adversary, and motivate action.

In Pakistan, leading mullahs regularly highlight the shame and suffering citizens have experienced as a result of foreign domination: from several centuries of British colonization, to ongoing US pressure on the government to combat terrorism. Said a host nation representative: “There is an immense amount of anger and frustration over the



Pictured from left to right: Mr. Ghulam Ishaq, University of San Diego and Ms. Dana Brown, Peace Brigades International.

US and Britain’s actions. Madrasa students are taught that the West plans to take over Pakistan and repress its people. When you look at the country’s past history, that perspective is not as off-base as you might first think.” According to the workshop speaker, Pakistanis believe that the US promotes oppression globally, supports apostate Islamic governments, manipulates the United Nations into imposing sanctions on Muslims, supports Israel’s occupation of Palestine, and seeks control over

the region’s oil resources. The US’s military presence in the country reinforces Pakistani’s feelings of powerlessness. “When the smoke clears on a missile strike, the Taliban is there, interpreting what it means,” said a workshop participant. In addition, the culture’s idealization of martyrdom — promoted with videos and songs — validates the use of violence as a strategy for preserving one’s personal and social identity and avenging the collective wounds experienced by an oppressed people.

“Pakistanis have an immense amount of anger and frustration over the US and Britain’s actions. Madrasa students are taught that the West plans to take over Pakistan and repress its people. When you look at the country’s history, that perspective is not as off-base as you might first think.”

—Host nation representative

The background materials detailed the fictional NGO’s progress in working with a wide array of area stakeholders to empower disfranchised groups and help them develop non-violent conflict resolution skills. According to these materials, the NGO was well-established, locally accepted, and run by host nationals. Among the NGO’s many accomplishments: its work to equip 1,000 Pakistani women, who typically receive little education or professional training, with business skills to empower them economically; and its successful training of

125 female and male students in conflict transformation skills. These students then returned to their home communities and conducted similar programs, thereby sensitizing a total of 75,000 individuals.

Workshop participants were instructed to consider multiple factors as they structured their working relationship with the NGO. First, Dr. Arai urged participants to ensure that the working relationship – and any resulting programs the group designed – was as conflict-sensitive as possible. To accomplish this objective, participants were instructed to investigate the major psychological, cultural, and structural roots of organized militancy in the region, with an emphasis on the Pakistani Taliban’s ideology and actions. Second, practitioners needed to consider the challenges that their team, which would be comprised of both international and local actors, would face working together. Participants were asked to discuss how these issues could potentially impede their ability to establish a successful partnership with the host nation NGO and accomplish joint goals. And finally, participants were urged to consider the different skills, capacities, and concepts they had



Pictured: Mr. Jean-Pierre DeBarros, US Department of Health and Human Services.

learned in the workshop and apply them to the design of the proposed campaign.

According to a report from the New America Foundation, three primary factors have contributed to the NWFP’s destabilization and radicalization: the ineffectual, corrupt performance of the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal Government from 2002 to 2007; the inability to reform the province’s madrasas; and insurgency in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, which adjoin the province.⁴ While the province is ethnically

diverse with Critralis and Hindko-speaking communities representing 30 percent of the NWFP’s population, its politics are dominated by Pashtuns.⁵

Pakistan’s madrasas, or Islamic schools, have provided Sunni children with religious training on the Quran and Islamic texts for several centuries. However, the movement has grown dramatically in the past few decades, from 189 schools in 1947⁶ to a current count that news sources variously estimate between 20,000 and 40,000, which are responsible for educating as many as two million children. Historical



developments contributing to their rise include the Islamisation of the national curriculum during the 1980s under General Mohammad Zia ul-Haq; the use of madrasas to train Afghan refugees as fighters in Afghanistan; and former President Pervez Musharraf's failed attempts at reforming extremist schools.^{7,8} In addition, author Hassan Abbas states that the uneasy alliance brokered between President Pervez Musharraf and the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), a coalition of five religious political parties, led to the Islamisation of the NWFP during the MMA's 2002-2008 tenure: The MMA imposed sharia law in 2005 and enabled the continued rise of the Taliban in this province, while the government tried ineffectually to combat terrorism.⁹ Today, the Taliban and other militant groups, who operate in small, highly mobile groups, attack government and civilian targets at will in the province, with last year's Swat Valley conflict between the government and the Tehrik-i-Nifaz-i-Shariat-i-Mohammadi (TNSM) forces serving only to strengthen international actors' and the public's conviction that the government is unable to stem the growth of organized militancy in the region. Meanwhile, the government is viewed ambivalently by the country's people. "In Pakistan, we have both a religious culture and a growing secular administration," said a host nation representative. "But our district and county administrative offices control and extract, rather than deliver the services we need."

Western analysts and politicians have watched the rise of extremist madrasas with alarm, viewing mullahs' emphasis on rote



Ms. Roseann Johnson, Center for Stabilization and Reconstruction Studies, worked with Dr. Arai to develop workshop content and facilitated group discussions at the event.

memorization of Quranic texts and their militant interpretation of key passages as fostering an environment conducive to training would-be terrorists. Not only were many members of the Afghan Taliban Government former attendees of Pakistan madrasas, but one of the four suicide bombers involved with the 2005 attacks on the London underground, Shehzad Tanweer, had spent also spent time at such a school.¹⁰ Since 2004, more than half of the most serious jihadist plots have originated from Pakistan, while al-Qaeda was involved in more than a third of all of these plots.¹¹

What has fueled the explosive growth of these institutions? Host nation representatives and workshop participants cited multiple factors contributing to their growth, including:

- Crippling poverty that results in widespread unemployment and a lack of economic opportunity for most citizens
- The provision of free education, housing, and meals to poor students who otherwise would go without
- Decades of underfunding and neglect that have left the public education system in a shambles
- A national identity that has been fractured by extended occupations, ongoing conflict, and ineffectual governance
- A pervasive sense of national powerlessness and hopelessness that has been communicated intergenerationally and is reinforced by tribal leaders and insurgent commanders
- Illiteracy that reaches 50 percent, meaning that most citizens do not have access to mainstream media sources and cannot read and interpret the Quran on their own
- Parents' desire to protect their children against Western corruption and teach them traditional Islamic values

- A Pakistani Government that is perceived as illegitimate in the eyes of its citizens because of its corruption and inability to deliver essential services
- US and other international actors, who provided financial support to Pakistan’s madrasas to support their training of Afghan fighters during the Cold War, viewing this strategy as a hedge against the Soviet Union’s growing influence. In addition, a host nation representative stated that the US Government funded the development of Pakistani math textbooks promoting jihad. These books have since been adopted by the Taliban, reprinted by the millions, and distributed throughout the country, he said.

Workshop participants broke into small groups to discuss issues – external intervention, realism, coordination, security, and sustainability – that would affect their planned collaboration with the Pakistani NGO. Highlights of group presentations follow:

EXTERNAL INTERVENTION: Workshop participants acknowledged the

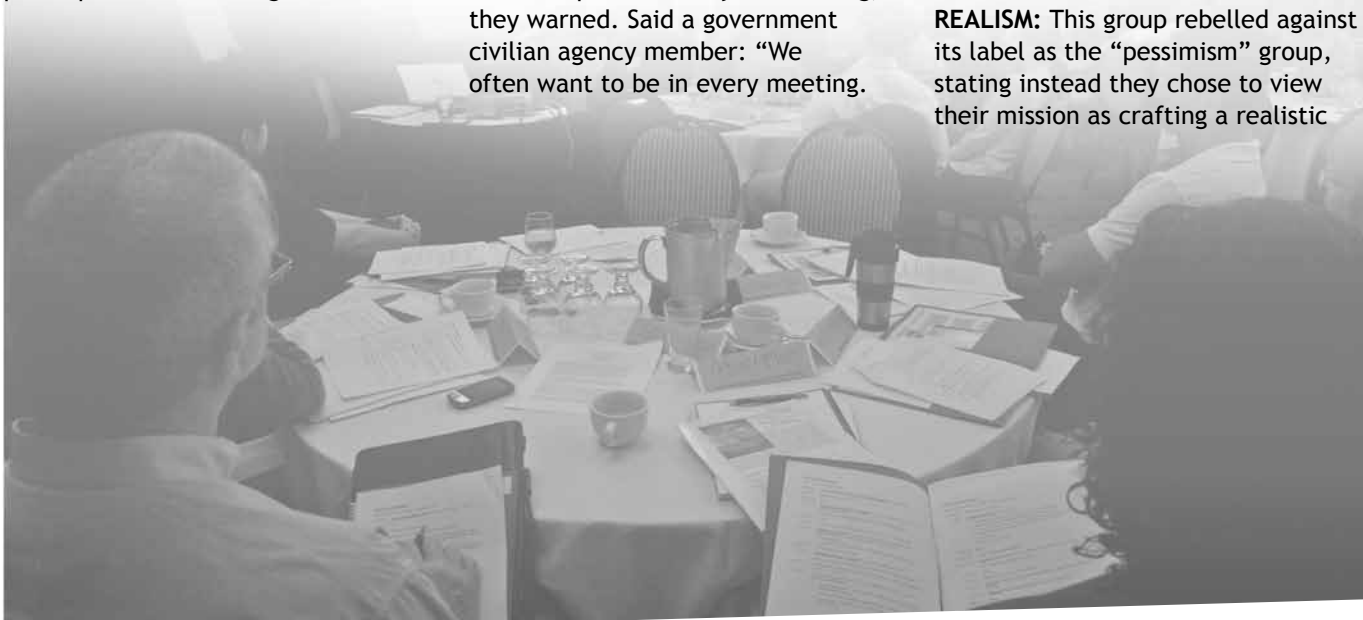


Pictured: Mr. Eltigani Abdelrhman, Peacebuilding Center for the Horn of Africa, Eritrea.

difficulty of working in a country where outside actors are viewed with mistrust and hostility. They recommended spending ample time preparing for the campaign by performing upfront assessments, building credibility and trust with key stakeholders, identifying respected authority figures, and designing the partnership to ensure parties worked together in a supportive and complementary fashion. Achieving such objectives would require new ways of working, they warned. Said a government civilian agency member: “We often want to be in every meeting.

However, working with partners means that you have to let go of some control.” In addition, actors should be prepared to relinquish or adjust cultural beliefs and biases that do not fit the local context. Said a former IGO member: “When I worked in Gaza, it was very difficult for me as a Muslim woman to assert my authority. So I had to overstate the role of Islam and understate the role of women to achieve my objective.”

REALISM: This group rebelled against its label as the “pessimism” group, stating instead they chose to view their mission as crafting a realistic



perspective on what could be achieved. As such, they felt that the peacebuilding campaign should be carefully designed to meet the needs of local communities. Key issues to consider included addressing the role of women, leveraging current power structures, and developing a successful relationship between international actors and local stakeholders. Dr. Arai urged the group to identify local actors who had horizontal access to key stakeholders: In Iraq, he said, a mid-level group of tribal leaders has created a peace zone in the midst of sectarian violence by reaching out to local communities, municipal and national leaders, and militants.

COORDINATION: Tasked with defining mechanisms for facilitating stakeholder coordination, this group stated that it was important to determine what this term meant: whether it was as simple as information sharing or as complex as cross-community cooperation. To do so, the NGO would host international and local actors for a short conference to determine their willingness to synchronize efforts; work together to maintain security; and map projects, to avoid duplicating others' efforts. Participants also recommended



The in-depth Pakistan case study afforded participants with the opportunity to discuss multiple approaches, obtain the feedback of host nation representatives, and refine their programmatic recommendations.

creating a strategic communications plan to promote actors' programs and dispel any negative perceptions perpetuated by local community members or hostile groups. A host nation representative urged the group to consider organizational budgets and how international actors' salaries, which dwarf those received by their host nation counterparts, would be viewed by the local populace.

SECURITY: Participants stressed the importance of maintaining

effective security, stating that they would seek to use information networks to distribute data and create good situational awareness, conduct risk assessments, and build relationships with local tribal leaders and private security providers, as appropriate. They also said that it was important to use safeguards to protect national staff and ensure they were not put in harm's way. However, a host nation representative asked why the group would even consider bringing external actors into the area if it could jeopardize the safety of local staff.

SUSTAINABILITY: Workshop participants said they would need to learn more about the NGO's goals and strategy before they could develop specific programs. As a consequence, they recommended conducting an assessment to determine key actors; areas of focus; and plans for building capacity, including whether this would occur at a grassroots, regional, or national level. A host nation representative challenged the group, asking how it planned to transfer knowledge to local actors.

“ On one level, we don't want you to intervene in our country. But on another level, I know that you are going to come anyway. I can either pick up a gun or ask myself what I can gain from you. Everyone in this room has unique strengths and attributes. ”

—Host nation representative to international actors

In a subsequent phase of the exercise, participants were asked to design programs that would achieve the local NGO's goals of creating a multi-year peace advocacy campaign that would reverse and transform organized militancy. Participants proposed:

- *Creating skill building centers for youth to engage them positively in society and harness their potential as serving as agents of change.* Participants recommended providing after-school vocational training; reading, writing, and math instruction; sports programs; and conflict resolution classes. To ensure that programs were locally appropriate and sustainable, the group would undertake upfront assessments, conduct outreach to local leaders, and leverage UN coordination structures and existing programs. Participants also recommended delivering educational instruction solely within the context of vocational training to avoid the perception that the centers were competing directly with madrasas.

Exercise facilitators asked the group to consider the role of



Pictured: Mr. Hoang Nguyen, Volunteers for Peace, Vietnam and Mr. Ted Kanamine, US Department of State.

women in their program design. According to scenario guidance, the local NGO partnering with the group had addressed gender issues two ways: offering livelihoods training to more than 1,000 women and providing conflict resolution classes to more than 80 females (out of 125 total individuals), empowering women to act as agents of change in this region.

- *Using sports as a conduit for building understanding and*

tolerance with youth. A second group, also targeting youth, proposed the development of a regional cricket league, where tribal teams would compete against each other for the opportunity to participate in a national championship. Participants said they would use sports to teach key principles such as teamwork, fairness, equality, and peaceful competition. Said an international security forces member: "In South Africa, actors used the game of rugby to bring people together."



While other attendees acknowledged that sports can be a powerful tool for engaging youth constructively in play and relationships, one stated that focusing teams on winning, rather than simply enjoying physical activity, can have unintended negative consequences. In Colombia, he said, soccer championships ended up exacerbating violence and ethnic divisions, as players, swept up in the spirit of competition, focused on winning at all costs.



Pictured: Mr. Victor Bepeh, The Nigerian Police Force.

- *Engaging elders and youth in activities that fostered a peace vision that was consistent with religious and cultural values.* By bringing different generations together, the group sought to demonstrate respect for elders, while also training community members on alternative ways of interpreting the Quran. The group also proposed vocational training and sports as a way of building leadership skills in youth and providing them with constructive outlets for their energy.

A workshop facilitator challenged the group’s ideological focus, as one participant used language such as, “We need to teach a more realistic version of Islam

and indoctrinate students in a more positive way.” Such terms, she said, not only assert the dominance of the speaker, but also imply that he or she is the arbiter of determining doctrinal correctness. While the group stated that they were using terms as a kind of shorthand and would be more careful in the field, she cautioned that using such language in any context can cause it to be internalized by its users.

- *Empowering families by providing critical services such as meals*

at a center and offering women education classes in their homes. The group stated that they wanted to address gender inequality issues, but do so in a way that would demonstrate respect for family authority and community values.

While acknowledging that gender is an important consideration, an exercise facilitator questioned whether the group’s proposed programs would be sustainable, due to their high costs and service-intensive delivery model.

- *Building a local civilian response corps, akin to the model being developed by the US State Department’s Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization, comprised of the female peaceworkers trained by the NGO and local youth.* The group proposed using youth to conduct surveys on stakeholder needs, gaining insights that would shape program design. In addition, the group saw its role as helping the NGO build on its existing successes by increasing the scale of its delivery model.

“First, you challenge us and say: ‘Who are you to come into my country and tell me what to do?’ But then you say: ‘Please come, but show us your vulnerability and not just your strength.’”

— Educator to a host nation representative

While facilitators commended participants for their emphasis on building existing capacity, they cautioned group members to think carefully about the implications of language. The term “civilian response corps,” said one, evokes military connotations, which could contravene the group’s peacebuilding focus.

After hearing all of the groups’ presentations, a host nation representative, who works for a local NGO in Pakistan, offered his perspective on working with international actors. As a native of Pakistan and an experienced peace practitioner, he is steeped in the local context and has an understanding of his country’s conflict history and ideologies that dates back 5,000 years. Despite the fact he is a resident expert on the issues facing his country and is already implementing successful programs through his NGO, he often encounters external actors who have an elitist mentality: perceiving that they alone have the answer to his country’s problems. What his country’s aid organizations need help with, he said, is not necessarily designing new or different programs, but learning new skills and scaling initiatives that already exist. “The humanitarian group in this scenario already has working relationships, skilled staff, and capacity-building programs in place. Did you even



Pictured: Dr. Arai (center), offers assistance to Mr. Andrew Michels, US Agency for International Development and Ms. Nassima Neggaz, Georgetown University.

recognize it as a valid partner?” he challenged workshop attendees. Although the NGO had already trained 1,000 women in livelihood skills and 125 male and female community members in peacebuilding, very few of the groups leveraged these resources, choosing to create entirely new initiatives targeting different groups.

A government civilian agency member concurred with the NGO member’s criticism, stating: “A lot of Americans think that they have all the answers. As a consequence, they spend a lot of time offering solutions rather than listening. That creates a lot of baggage. We need to have a sense of humility when we work with others in the field.” Another group member

expressed ambivalence, stating that the host nation representative’s comments engendered first anger, and then contrition in him. “First, you challenge us and say: ‘Who are you to come into my country and tell me what to do?’ But then you say: ‘Please come, but show us your vulnerability and not just your strengths.’”

The host nation representative acknowledged that the ambivalence exists on both sides. “On one level, we don’t want you to intervene in our country. But on another level, I know that you are going to come anyway. I can either pick up a gun or ask myself what I can gain from you. Everyone in this room has unique strengths and attributes; I can learn something from each of you, both personally and organizationally.” ●●



“ How do we suspend the need to have firm answers to everything? We all have a strong sense of identity, but how do we suspend that so that we can focus on conflict resolution and not be trapped in one-dimensional thinking? ”

— Educator

Best Practices and Lessons Learned with Peacebuilding

Workshop participants gathered for an open dialogue session on the final day to discuss their experiences working with cultural others in the field. They shared the following best practices and lessons learned:

- *Realize that cultural others will often perceive you first in terms of your group identity, which they may view in a stereotypical or polarizing fashion. As the*

first NGO representative to Sierra Leone in 2002, a workshop participant said that she knew that the UN Pakistani peacekeepers, who provided her with security and situational awareness, saw her first as an American: a blue-eyed, blond woman who represented a different culture and values. Although she was a Western woman accustomed to informal dress, the NGO representative sought to accord her hosts respect by wearing long skirts and shirts and by avoiding the gaze of male soldiers. This NGO worker's efforts to respect cultural mores helped her develop a cooperative, open relationship with her military counterparts. During her two and a half year



Pictured from left to right: Mr. Stephen Nava, US Air Force and US Naval Postgraduate School and Ms. Virginia Morrison, Mediators Beyond Borders.

tenure in the country, she said that she was able to talk with her hosts about their perceptions of her country and vice versa, with both parties correcting cultural misunderstandings. “This relationship could have been very different if we had not approached each other with a sense of respect and common mission,” she said. In fact, the aid worker served as a cultural interpreter and mediator for the soldiers, counseling other NGO members who subsequently entered the country that they needed to change their attire – such as short skirts and sleeveless tops – to avoid offending the Pakistanis.



Pictured: Ms. Carolyn Laurenzano, US Department of State and Mr. Scott MacKenzie, independent consultant.

- *Maintain cultural openness and flexibility, using new information or insights to increase empathy for others and drive change on both a personal and organizational level.* While attending a conference in East Timor, Dr. Arai formed the acquaintance of two host nation conflict workers. Well aware of his own nation’s violence against the East Timorese, Dr. Arai asked if there was any way he could contribute to the country’s peacebuilding process. One of the gentlemen averted his eyes, saying

that his grandfather had been killed by a bomb dropped by a Japanese plane. Instead of acting defensive, Dr. Arai began to cry sincerely, bowing deeply to express his regret and apologizing for the atrocities committed by his country. The next morning, the peaceworker asked Dr. Arai to help a colleague establish a conflict transformation program at one of the country’s universities. The point of this anecdote? Humility and contrition can help bridge significant cultural divides and also provide an opportunity for forgiveness and restoration, whether it occurs between

individuals – or nations. Similarly, an IGO worker used a powerful film to galvanize a general, who had been involved in the Indonesian government’s brutal repression of the Free Aceh movement, into working for peace. Deeply moved by the stories of women who had lost their husbands during the 2003 war – people who had borne the cost of his actions – the general decided to speak out publicly in support of the peace process, facing rejection and humiliation for doing so.

- *Understand your own cultural identity and how that creates a lens through which you view*



and interpret the world. An NGO member who had worked in Israel offered a proof in point. After mediating a grassroots negotiation session in Jerusalem, which required that Palestinian participants obtain entry permits, the group held its next meeting in Jericho. This time, Israeli participants needed passes; however, when they arrived at the checkpoint, they were detained for two hours in the baking sun. When the Israelis finally arrived at the negotiation venue, they told their Palestinian counterparts that they now understood their experience. The Palestinians retorted that the Israelis had only experienced the small inconvenience of being delayed a single time, whereas they experienced the powerlessness and frustration of being stopped every single day because of their national identity.

While the Israelis had acquired new insight with their experience, they also made a common mistake: engaging in naïve realism. With conflict, each party perceives that its perspective is the sole legitimate lens through which to view the dispute. Such thinking impedes



Mr. Azhar Hussain, International Center for Religion and Diplomacy; Ms. Monica Tanuhandaru, International Organization for Migration, Indonesia; and Mr. Faiysal AliKhan, FIDA/Rural Support Programmes Network, Pakistan all gave presentations on innovative conflict transformation strategies originated by host nation actors.

individuals' ability to engage in constructive dialogue and increase their understanding of others. At the workshop, a host nation representative warned against fixed thinking and unexamined belief systems. "Prejudices can only be undermined by the constant questioning of one's own cultural and religious beliefs," he said. "Everyone finds it difficult to sustain contradictions. It takes maturity to allow opposites to exist peacefully."

Recognizing the importance of cultural influences, CSRS hosted an evening teaching session on the topic of identity-forming narratives and how these stories impact actors' approaches to conflict transformation. An educator who gave the opening presentation said: "We are not monolithic and unchangeable. Much of whom we are is fashioned from the narratives we have been told from birth on." Several actors shared anecdotes about how their commitment to increasing cultural fluency – such as honoring others' cultural customs with regards to dress, meals, and sacred rituals – provided an opportunity for dialogue and interaction that would have otherwise not occurred. Some said that because of their willingness to bridge cultures, they served as interpreters: helping other external actors navigate unfamiliar societal milieus and observe important cultural cues. Added the educator: "Don't allow people in conflict

“Prejudices can only be undermined by the constant questioning of one's own cultural and religious beliefs. Everyone finds it difficult to sustain contradictions. It takes maturity to allow opposites to exist peacefully.”

– Host nation representative

to remain strangers. Conflict generally cannot withstand inquiry from a genuine desire to understand.”

- *Leverage trusted cultural guides to interpret community taboos and accepted cultural practices.* A host nation NGO member working in a highly volatile environment in Pakistan, where tens of thousands of tribal members had been displaced by a military operation, used cultural fluency to conduct a humanitarian aid operation without a single incident. The actor leveraged local guides to learn about key decision makers and grievance mechanisms. His NGO then involved these tribal leaders in conducting a needs assessment and helping design the aid program. In addition, he offered to provide a few temporary staff members to the provincial government, improving the lines of communication between aid workers and government leaders and obtaining invaluable insights into governmental priorities.
- *Ensure that host nation actors drive program development: from planning, to implementation, to assessing results.* Host nation actors – who understand stakeholder needs, possess critical relationships, and have established ways of working – should drive development programs, while international actors should play a facilitative role, offering technical expertise and funding



Mr. Azhar Hussain, International Center for Religion and Diplomacy, offers insights on structuring successful relationships with host nation actors to Mr. Pieter Dykhorst, Orthodox Peace Fellowship.

to help achieve desired goals. When international actors use openness and vulnerability, rather than predetermined agendas, to approach host nation actors, they set the stage for building successful partnerships. Said an IGO member: “I am a Nigerian working in Sri Lanka. If I tell you that I am bringing peace to that country, I am lying. Whatever works in my homeland will not work in Sri Lanka. All I am bringing is the process.” According to this actor, leading with openness and flexibility has allowed him to navigate a complex cultural milieu: building bridges with other international aid workers and creating close, trusting relationships with host nationals. As a consequence, he was still working in the country, whereas every single one of his colleagues that had participated in his training class had already departed Sri Lanka.

When organizations demonstrate ignorance about stakeholder needs, it communicates powerful negative messages that can create cultural impasses – and doom projects. A host nation NGO member shared an anecdote about working on a food distribution project in Sudan with an international aid group. The organization had secured funding for food, but did not have trucks or personnel to distribute it. “They expected that people would rush the truck,” said the host nation representative, surprised and appalled by their ignorance. Nor did the NGO provide the charcoal beneficiaries needed to cook with, meaning that many of the supplies were wasted. He asked the donors in the room: “USAID gives international NGOs funding, but sometimes imposes very restrictive terms and does not allow them to hire locals to make improvements based on assessments. If that

is the case, why are you going into a country? People will not understand you, they will not accept you, and they will refuse to implement the project.”

- *Carefully consider the implications of language.* While external actors work collaboratively with local partners, they often unconsciously use terms implying control or domination. For example, a host nation representative stated that multiple workshop participants spoke about “using local NGOs,” implying that the international partner would set the agenda for both the relationship and any resulting programs. Decades of research and scores of failed initiatives have proven that an externally driven, top-down model doesn’t work. Instead, such an approach often results in programs that don’t fit the local context, alienates key stakeholders, and creates systems and practices that can’t be sustained after external actors depart. External actors now seek to work in a supportive model, learning from their host nation colleagues and putting the practices and systems in place that will ensure local ownership.

Similarly, others spoke about the need to “reeducate madrasa students,” implying that Pakistani mullahs and their disciples don’t understand their own religious texts, although they study them for hours each day. While many Westerners believe that madrasa students are distorting Islamic texts, workshop speakers stated that there are numerous Quranic verses that address violence



Workshop participants presented conflict transformation strategies designed to stem the rise of militancy in Pakistan’s NWFP province and build the capacity of a local partner.

against non-believers and apostates. According to several websites, there are between 100 and 150 Quranic verses that speak about holy violence. Thus, it is far more accurate – and less derogatory – to use language that stresses actors’ desires to share alternative viewpoints and promote peace between followers of different faiths.

- *Harness the power of cultural carriers, those objects or ideas that have a unique resonance to a specific people.* Whether readily apparent or deeply embedded in a nation’s subconscious, these cultural carriers can be referenced to motivate the behavioral change of an entire people. As an example, Dr. Arai cited Mahatma Gandhi’s use of the salt tax for his first political protest against the British. Salt is a natural mineral that not only provides flavor for food, but is essential for life. In addition, it is a substance that everyone uses; as such it transcends

social, economic, and religious differences. In this model, salt became an important cultural carrier: illuminating the injustice of the British occupation and oppression and Indians’ right to self-determination. This cultural carrier – powerful, simple, and highly evocative – likely resonated with the Indian people much more than an immediate political assault on the British domination of the Indian textile trade would have. Gandhi drove home the symbolism of this protest by walking more than 240 miles to the beach to make his own salt. In so doing, he launched a global movement called “satyagraha,” which uses non-cooperation, civil disobedience, and constructive programs to seek the restoration of a people’s essential human rights.

- *Work to develop cultural fluency, to navigate a host nation’s mores and customs successfully and deepen relationships with others.* Actors who continually seek to increase their knowledge of cultural

others demonstrate respect for their counterparts and develop skills that enable them to work more successfully in a wide array of contexts. Practitioners who are incredibly skilled at navigating different cultures can also weigh competing cultural customs, knowing when to honor their own mores or allow another's to predominate. A host nation representative, who had traveled extensively throughout the world and been educated abroad, shared an example of how he successfully navigated the divide between two cultures. After working side by side with the US military to deliver aid in the wake of the Pakistani earthquake, this NGO member asked a US Army Colonel to come to his home on Thanksgiving, inviting guests and purchasing a turkey to celebrate this man's cultural holiday. While his guests told him not to usher the officer into the kitchen, because it violated Pakistani cultural norms, the NGO member, who had never served a turkey before, asked the officer to carve the bird for the group. The US Army Colonel became emotional,



The workshop's focus on group exercises and case studies allowed participants to learn from each other's experiences and develop cross-community networks they could leverage in the future.

saying that being invited into the host nation representative's home and accorded the honor of carving the turkey was a tremendous sign of respect. That gesture helped forge a personal relationship that persists to this day.

An NGO member described how he and a colleague used cultural symbols to navigate a complex situation where their lives were in danger. Invited to meet with a hostile Taliban commander, the NGO representatives were

stopped en route by a soldier and accused of spying for the Americans. The colleague stepped out of the car and threw three stones, a Pakistani cultural custom for swearing one's innocence even to the loss of one's family members. Recognizing the significance of this cultural cue, the guard let the two men pass. When the NGO member sat down with the commander, he then subverted cultural customs of hospitality to assert his dominance, putting the Taliban commander on the defensive. First, he threw a piece of meat on the



commander's dish, usurping his role as host. Then he invaded the commander's personal space, placing his hand on the man's thigh and staring into his eyes, while speaking assertively. After leaving abruptly and without permission for a short break, the NGO representative returned and sat at some distance from the commander. By averting his gaze, he forced the soldier to bend over to talk to him. "I knew that our security was at stake and that the most important message I communicated would not be my words, but my body language," said the NGO representative. "As a consequence, I used cultural norms in an animalistic, but non-violent way to assert my dominance."

- *Leverage existing relationships and structures, rather than trying to create new models.* International actors often seek to create programs from scratch, failing to leverage the many resources afforded them in the field. One such resource is the cluster system created by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to coordinate the delivery of humanitarian aid and reduce



Pictured: Mr. Juan Masullo, Conflict Analysis Resource Center, Colombia and Ms. Dana Brown, Peace Brigades International.

duplicative efforts, said an NGO member. In addition, actors don't always tap the power of informal systems. An NGO representative working in Sri Lanka said that he serves as the local source of security information — simply because he plays ball every day with host nationals who serve on the country's police and military forces. While the same opportunity is available to other actors, he is the only international practitioner to develop these relationships, he said.

Similarly, all societies have established conflict resolution systems that can provide actors with a means of helping fractured states address major societal injustices such as civil war and genocide. These systems can often provide a more effective strategy for dealing with grave atrocities than traditional legal mechanisms, as they involve the community in administering justice and also seek to promote societal reconciliation and healing. In Rwanda, state actors realized that they were ill-equipped to adjudicate the cases resulting from the 1994 slaughter of more than 800,000 individuals. As a consequence, they empowered local villages to use "gacaca," a form of dispute resolution used to settle cases over land use, property damage, and inheritance rights, to resolve all genocide cases, except for the worst atrocities.¹² "Gacaca," which means "on the grass,"¹³ is an open-air court system where villagers identify

“ In Rwanda, state actors realized they were ill-equipped to adjudicate the hundreds of thousands of cases resulting from the 1994 genocide and empowered local villages to use “gacaca,” a form of dispute resolution, to resolve all but the worst atrocities. ”

perpetrators and victims and present evidence against suspects in their home town. Locally appointed citizen judges weigh evidence against the accused, hand down sentences, and have the authority to reduce or eliminate charges.

- *Tap the peace potential inherent in each society rather than imposing unfamiliar, external constructs.* For many societies, this will mean harnessing the power of the sacred by incorporating faith traditions into conflict discourse. While international actors fear that madrasas are being used to groom terrorists, they also have peace potential, said a host nation representative. As a case in point, he cited the work of Afghan madrasas to lobby for the release of the 23 South Korean missionaries who were kidnapped by the Taliban in Ghazni in 2007. A NGO representative who works intensively with madrasas in Pakistan shared his organization's efforts to help mullahs reform their curriculums to include scientific social disciplines that promote tolerance and human rights; use teaching techniques that promote critical thinking; and instruct others in non-violent conflict resolution and dialogue facilitation skills. To date, his organization has trained nearly 1,000 madrasa leaders throughout the country; using a train-the-



Pictured: Dr. Ran Kuttner, Creighton University.

trainers model, these teachers are now training others.

- *Break desired changes into incremental, gradual steps – and explore the risks and rewards involved with taking these steps with local stakeholders.* An IGO member working in Aceh shared a grassroots project to provide citizens with Internet access that ended up having a national impact. In the aftermath of the tsunami, a local group of IT experts started a website and electronic mailing list to help link communities with the aid supplies flooding the country. While the Indonesian Government tightly controls the information flow – there is no independent media in Aceh – the extended crisis caused by the tsunami and

its aftermath created a window of opportunity that these IT experts decided to seize. The group provided equipment and internet access to all who asked – including educators, activists, and members of the security forces – and trained users on how to maintain Wi-Max systems. “We broke the control of the government by providing Internet access,” said the speaker. “There is no more propaganda from political parties; everyone can go online and get the information themselves.” When the country’s Islamic fundamentalists tried to restrict access, they conducted a survey and found that the top three users of new Internet connectivity were the Sharia police, the state police, and government officials. Embarrassed by these findings, the fundamentalists have yet to squash this budding movement which has empowered ordinary citizens with the ability to find and vet their own information. ●●

“ As Westerners, we never have a long-term commitment to the peace process. We are always in and out; it’s like putting Band-Aids on wounds. We say we want to address root causes, but then we are gone after a year. ”

- Government civilian agency member

Conclusion

Conflict is as old as mankind itself. Since the beginning of time, humans have used a wide array of dispute resolution strategies to address the issues that divide warring parties and help them pursue peace. While philosophers once posited that man’s moral evolution would keep pace with his growing technological and industrial sophistication, conflict still endures, wreaking harm on individuals and societies.

Modern conflict researchers and theorists have provided S&R practitioners with significant insights into root causes for violence and the high cost of sustaining intractable disputes. Meanwhile, actors themselves have amassed a wealth of best practices from conflict transformation initiatives conducted around the globe. Among the lessons learned is that externally driven interventions fail to address underlying social problems and don’t address the local context, resulting in a high rate of failure. However, when host nation actors lead the way, designing context-specific strategies and leveraging international actors’ technical expertise and funding resources,



Pictured from left to right in the foreground: Mr. Aimal Allaudin, United Nations Mine Action Center for Afghanistan and Lieutenant Junior Grade Mustafa Guner, Turkish Navy and US Naval Postgraduate School.

peacebuilding initiatives are far more likely to be accepted by key stakeholders. Such initiatives often leverage customary justice mechanisms that provide societies with tools to address systemic wrongs – while also providing a means for promoting societal reconciliation.

CSRS and Dr. Tatsushi Arai developed *Approaching Societies in Conflict* to provide S&R practitioners with a broader toolbox for approaching their important, challenging work. This immersive workshop was designed to help participants increase their cognitive understanding of key concepts undergirding contemporary conflict research, as well as gain exposure to non-traditional peacebuilding frameworks. During the multi-day event, participants put new insights and skills to work, developing ever-more targeted strategies for addressing the challenges posited by a



Participants shared best practices gained from years of fieldwork in post-conflict societies around the world.

fictional, yet very timely case study: stemming the growing tide of organized militancy in current-day Pakistan.

Programs such as *Approaching Societies in Conflict* provide participants with a unique opportunity to learn in a cross-community setting: sharing perspectives and experiences

with a diverse range of seasoned peers and working together to craft different approaches to the ancient challenge of conflict. Said an IGO member at the workshop: “The previous trainings I have participated in didn’t mirror anything I was doing in the field. This time, there were so many ‘ah-hahs.’ I have worked on these issues for more than 10 years. It was beneficial to recollect all my experiences: both the good things I’ve been involved with – and the mistakes.” ●●





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Tats's commitment to peacebuilding has evolved from his first encounter with victims of radiation sickness in Hiroshima when he was fifteen. His journey in conflict work took him to post-genocide Rwanda as a university lecturer of international relations and as a humanitarian NGO representative, to the Japanese branch of an international corporation as a personnel specialist responsible for managing cross-cultural industrial disputes, and to diverse settings of multi-track peacemaking in the Middle East, the African Great Lakes, South Asia, the Asia-Pacific region, and North America. As a trainer,

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Endnotes

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